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A BOOK ABOUT NAUGHTY BOYS

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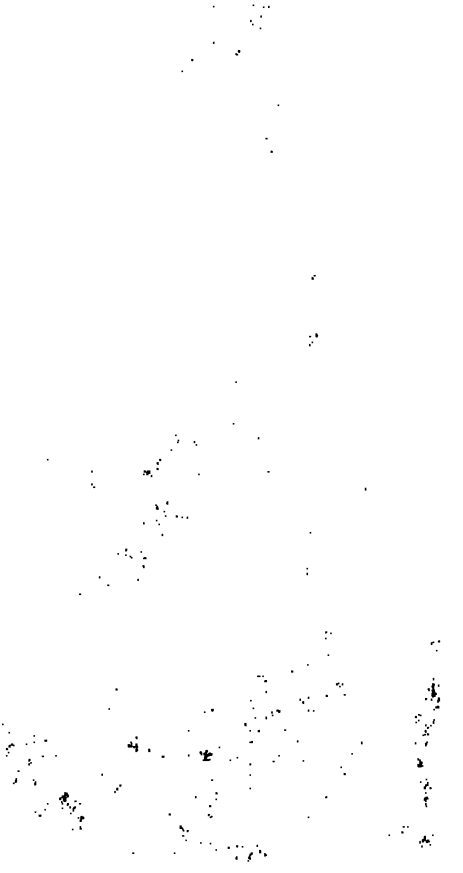

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OR

THE SUFFERINGS OF MR. DELTEIL.

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NAUGHTY BOYS

OR

THE SUFFERINGS OF MR. DELTEIL.

CHAPTER I.

DAGUERREOTYPE VIEW OF LAON—SUPERIOR PRIMARY INSTRUCTION—SINGULAR REFORMS BROUGHT ABOUT IN THE UNIVERSITY BY THE REVOLUTION OF JULY—LITTLE BINEAU'S EAR PLUNGES AN ESTABLISHMENT INTO DISTRESS.

LAON is a small town containing six thousand souls, ready to froth and fume on the smallest pretext. The chance arrival of a company of actors, a circus, or even a set of puppets, is more than enough to engross the whole attention of the poor capital of Aisne, indebted to its peculiar position for the superior rank awarded to it over the more important towns of the department. Situated on the plateau of a lofty hill, Laon could certainly defy any siege; but, unfortunately, at the same time, it almost defies the entrance of any sort of loaded vehicle. This hinderance to easy traffic causes the town to be but scantily supplied, and consequently prevents

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of Laon, showed himself everywhere, unconscious that he was an object of the deepest pity to the eighty-pounds-a-year citizens, whose sole occupation in life was their daily walk on the Promenade, and for whom the sight every Sunday and Thursday of the fourteen scholars constituting the Academy, was anything rather than a pleasure. These fourteen scholars were divided into two boarders and twelve day-scholars.

Notwithstanding his very best efforts, nay, not even though he had deprived the two boarders of their daily food, could Mr. Tassin's predecessor have helped leaving Laon over head and ears in debt. Up to 1830, the influences and tendencies of the Restoration had induced the families of Laon, from the highest to the lowest, to send their sons to the *Seminary*. The rising generation who now-a-days purchase a notary's business, or take farms in the neighbourhood, or become shopkeepers, clerks, or perhaps nothing at all, at that time passed as a matter of course through the hands of the priests of the Little Seminary of "Our Lady of Liesse."

The twelve day-scholars and two boarders were the children of parents notorious as partisans of progress, liberals, and admirers of General Foy. They were looked upon as the long heads of the town, and known to be subscribers to the *Journal de l'Aisne*, a diminutive paper, almost entirely filled with advertisements. Reading among these the notification of Mr. Tassin's appointment as Principal of the Communal College, the long

heads all gave an ominous shake, meant to express that before eight days more had elapsed, that gentleman would have lost the look of perfect contentment with which he now perambulated the streets.

One surprise followed close on the heels of another; most of the masons, painters, and workmen of the town, were seen hard at work, not merely adding to or demolishing walls, but absolutely erecting new buildings. No wonder Laon was electrified by this, when it was proverbial that the dismal College, part of an old monastery, was already a world too wide for the two boarders and twelve day-scholars. But Mr. Tassin was not a man to keep the townsfolk long in suspense; he forthwith issued a prospectus, of two small pages only, yet big with events.

New terms were intimated by this prospectus, the Principal announcing at the same time his intention of adding music, fencing, and foreign languages, to what had been taught under the former Principal. Parents, in general, do not seem to lay much stress on the question of health. "Of course my son will be properly fed," is an observation made in the master's private room, and there is not one example on record of its having been answered in the negative.

But the greatest effect was produced by a new regulation, requiring the pupils of the College to adopt a particular costume. Whether in or out of school, the boarders were always to be in uniform, undress on week-

days, full dress whenever they went out for school walks. The day-scholars were also required to be in uniform if they took a share in these parades.

This was a master-stroke of policy ; a few censured, it is true, but the many approved ; the oldest inhabitants tried in vain to recollect if the times of the Great Republic had furnished any precedent for subjecting to military discipline children of eight years old, the age when the study of Latin began. As hitherto, the appearance of some stray student of the Polytechnic had never failed to set all Laon agape, it may be imagined what a general agitation ensued on the publication of Mr. Tassin's prospectus. Before the end of three months, the Principal made his appearance at the head of fifteen boarders, dressed in blue frock-coats, with collars and facings of sky-blue. The Cathedral alarm-bell never brought together a greater crowd than did the drummer of the national guard, gallantly leading the little Collegians to the foot of the mountain.

Mr. Tassin was perfectly radiant; delight shone forth from every pit in his face ; he forgot he was the Principal of a district school, and felt as if he were transformed into a military commander. On that day there was a mingling in his feelings of the pride of a general in the hour of victory, with the preposterous vanity of a drum-major. In his black coat and ample white cravat, his head erect and body rigid, he looked and stepped like a drill-sergeant in the dress of an advocate. To Mr.

Tassin's imagination the fifteen boarders took the proportions of a complete battalion; and, on leaving the College, that they might be seen, he made a wide circuit by the "Plain," a manœuvre which obliged them to traverse the whole town.

The young rabble, at play on the ramparts, made a unanimous rush after the drum. Any other effect was not immediately perceptible, Cloister Street being far too aristocratic openly to show its curiosity. The Principal was not, however, altogether disappointed, for his quick eye had detected the corner of many a ground-floor curtain drawn slyly aside. For this invisible public Mr. Tassin made a prodigious display of activity; at one moment he was in front of the drummer, the next hovering on the flank of his little squad, while in passing to the rear he contrived to make the pavement ring again with his martial tread, as if to give the time and step. When they reached the square of the Vegetable Market, all the shopkeepers and market people turned out, grinning and eyeing one another with the greatest astonishment. While Mr. Tassin and his Collegians were passing, the best of customers might have asked in vain for an ounce of coffee. Attracted by the unusual sound of the drum, numbers of work-people in the side streets left their work to see what was the matter. Castle Street being very narrow, was quickly filled to suffocation by the curious, who must be classed under three distinct heads; first, those who retained sufficient self-

control not to come further than their door-steps; secondly, those who followed in the wake of the Principal, his scholars, and the ragged youngsters of the ramparts; and, thirdly, the far-sighted, who ran on before to give notice to their friends and families.

By the time the procession reached Borough Square, the spectators were ranged round it four or five deep. One universal shout of admiration saluted the advent of Mr. Tassin, the drummer, and the military-looking Collegians, and accompanied them down the long street of St. John, to the gate of Semilly.

This exhibition, simple as it appears, was followed by a success of which the projector himself had had no idea. By the end of a fortnight, the parents of twenty-five day-scholars had made up their minds to incur the unheard of expense of putting their sons into uniform. Those primitive days were gone for ever, when old coats and trousers might be taken out of lumber closets, to be metamorphosed into new clothes for the children. But perhaps the most extraordinary result was the sight of poor clerks, with the wretched pittance of thirty-two pounds a year, among the most eager in urging the tailors to send home uniforms for their sons.

It is true, that the first great outlay made, it was not so ruinous a business after all. The necessity for a best suit was done away—the blue surtout with its sky-blue collar and facings answering for all occasions, whether for religious festival or social meeting. The uniform

cap, too, replaced the hat, perhaps the only article of dress possessing so much individuality as to make it very nearly impossible for any father with common feeling to transmit one to a darling son.

The rumours of this military promenade pervaded the country, and brought such an influx of farmers' sons to the Communal College, as to afford Mr. Tassin, at the end of the year, the pleasure of a pretty long sum in Addition, of the profits arising from thirty-seven boarders. To the citizens of Laon, who took no note of the new and general impulse given to public education by the Revolution of July, Mr. Tassin was a living prodigy; with ten times his talent, he would not have succeeded under the Restoration in picking up ten pupils.

Close to the military storehouse, and at a very short distance from the College, is a preparatory school kept by Mr. Tanton. Its interests were seriously affected by the new and dangerous competitor who had so suddenly started up. Hitherto boys had been left with Mr. Tanton to learn orthography, writing, the Four Rules, and their own language, very often till they were fifteen, the age at which it was customary to bind them apprentices, or get them places in some Government office. Even those who were destined for orders, or other learned professions, were not sent to the Little Seminary of Liesse until they were twelve years old.

Mr. Tanton, as well as the old clothes, fell a sacri-

fice to Mr. Tassin's prospectus, the regulation uniform, and, above all, to the drum. Mr. Tanton's mode of instruction very narrowly escaped being denounced as a crime. His well-known cane, the terror of idlers, was contrasted with the drum to which the little Collegians marched so beautifully, and of course it kicked the beam. A sudden ambition that their sons should become Latin scholars, seized on burgess and mechanic; add to this, that the common council, sympathizing with the general enthusiasm, founded twelve semi-scholarships, which, distributed among the poorer officials, facilitated the sending of their sons to the College.

How could Mr. Tanton enter the lists with a Mr. Tassin? the only point in his favour was his magnificent hand,—figuratively speaking, be it understood. Mr. Tanton wrote English running hand like no one else—his writing (it was impossible to deny it) *was* like copperplate, but then he possessed neither the grand deportment, nor the fine manner, nor the insinuating smile, nor, though last, not least in its effect, the self-conceit of his formidable rival. Mr. Tanton was a big, frowning, stormy-looking man, with a body like a bay-window, clothed in a long loose black coat, which had about as much acquaintance with a brush, as the wearer's hair with a comb. Out of this coat protruded two hands, that were a never-ending wonder to all admirers of caligraphy—hands they could scarcely be called, for in fact they were mere stumps, with only the thumb fully developed.

When once, however, this thumb laid hold of a pen, it obeyed this one master better than the bulk of mankind's five digits. Mr. Tanton executed the firmest of down strokes, the finest of hair strokes, while the boldness with which he dashed his flourishes over the paper, was as wonderful as their curves were capricious. Mr. Tanton, it must be allowed, had considerable difficulty in grasping anything, but once grasped, he held firm, as little Bineau's ear could testify; especially on one occasion when it nearly dissolved partnership for ever with his head.

Little Bineau's ear became a serious one for Mr. Tanton, who, if the truth must be told, was an over-zealous partisan of old-fashioned modes of instruction. Little Bineau, the son of Mr. Bineau, registrar of the prefecture, had been caught in the commission of some outrageous mischief. Severely punished as above narrated, he went home, concealed the heinousness of the crime, but exaggerated the punishment. Viewing her son as a martyr, Madame Bineau left the dinner to be spoiled, and hurried away to seek her husband, who, in his turn, deserting his papers, went to seek Mr. Tanton.

The writing-master was in a ferocious humour. The rolling of drums, which had been going on for the last two hours on the ramparts behind his house, had already told on his nerves; but his irritability increased to fury when he discovered two of his own boys earnestly practising this martial instrument under the direction of the

drummer of the National Guard, who had accepted an engagement at the College.

Mr. Tassin had lured away these two pupils of Mr. Tanton's, by bestowing on each a semi-scholarship and a uniform, but on the express understanding that, for the future, in all the school-walks, they were to march as drummers at the head of the Collegians.

"Who gave you leave to handle Louis so roughly?" bawled Mr. Bineau, as soon as he caught sight of the schoolmaster.

"Do you know what he had done?" asked Mr. Tanton.

"I'll be bound he never did anything to deserve such abominable treatment—my poor child—so good, so gentle!"

"It is impossible even to mention what he did; and a child capable of such tricks deserves the severest punishment."

"You have no right to do what you did to him, and, if you had any feeling, you would blush for your brutality when you hear how his mother wept."

"Mothers have nothing to do with what takes place in schools," interrupted Mr. Tanton. "I have known plenty who cried when their sons complained of a paltry rap over the knuckles, and who, when they came to know the truth, were the very first to insist on the boys being well punished—yes! and those the most violent in their outcry against me."

"One thing is very clear," said Mr. Bineau, sarcasti-

cally, " and that is, that blows don't teach much, for Louis knows nothing, absolutely nothing."

" You are quite right—he knows nothing," answered the writing-master; " and how can he, when his whole time is spent in mischief? I never saw such a child."

" Why, he is gentleness itself," interposed the father.

" Then he must be a precious little hypocrite at home."

" Was there ever a child so falsely judged!—and all because you have stupified him by bad treatment when you might have led him by a silken thread."

" I should just like you to catch him at some of his tricks in your drawing-room."

" Come, come, Mr. Tanton, let me hear no more of such speeches. Louis has been too well brought up for anything of the kind; besides, he takes after his mother, and I don't suppose you will go so far as to accuse her of setting him a bad example. Even in my boyish days, no such charges were ever brought against me. That some of the low boys you take—and there are plenty in your school—should have bad tricks, is likely enough, for the children of poor people have no respect for anything human or divine—But *my* son! why, it is a personal insult to *me* your even supposing him guilty. You say he never learns—well, I have proof to the contrary. He has music-lessons at home, and his master assures me that the quickness of his comprehension is quite uncommon, and that he makes no doubt that if we wished it we could get him admitted into the Conservatoire. Never

has he had even a tap with the bow—not one, do you hear!—nor once been found fault with."

"All I can say is," replied Mr. Tanton, "that if this be really so, the Louis at school is very different from the Louis at home. The one I know is a little demon, a young rascal, who would weary the patience of a saint. Do you know, sir, what he and his friend Canivet did only a week ago? They have taken a dislike to my son Charles, a perfect lamb! I can't imagine why they hate him, but they do, and the poor child suffers daily martyrdom at their hands. In every game he is always made the ox or the horse, and the blows he gets are uncountable. Well, last week, my son Charles wanted to go to bed—he sleeps in a room next to the kitchen. When he went in, no bed to be seen, Mr. Bineau; neither mattress, nor bolster, nor pillow, nor counterpane—not even the bedstead. I overheard the child call out, 'Mamma, where is my bed? I can't find my bed.' He was in despair at not finding his bed, and no wonder, for all children are fond of sleep. My wife said it was witchcraft, but I set it down to thieves, though even then there was something miraculous in the sudden disappearance of the bed. It seemed next to impossible that a tolerably-sized bed, and all the bedding, should have been carried away without being seen by some one in the house. So I went to the dining-room, where all the boys were at supper, and said, 'Young gentlemen, my son Charles's bed has vanished!' They all burst out

laughing. This made me suspect there was some plot among them, and that very likely they were all guilty. 'I warn you,' added I, 'that the one who has the insolence to laugh again when I speak, shall conjugate the verb, *I love to laugh*, five hundred times.'

"This made them grave enough; and then I began to question them as to whether they had seen any stranger lurking about the buildings, or in the court; they all declared they had seen no one. I gave them an hour after supper to find the bed, which, after all, could not be lost. Mr. Bineau—can you believe it?—the bed was in the garret, and it was your son who, with Canivet's help, had put it there!"

"This is too much; and you really expect me to believe this!" exclaimed the Registrar. "Why, in the first place, Louis is too weak, and so is Canivet. They could never have had the strength to carry a great big bed, and all the other things, up to the garret."

"That's the astonishing part of the business," replied Tanton; "for those two little creatures, Canivet and Louis, have about as much strength as a couple of mice; but when they are bent on mischief, they would carry away mountains, I believe. It is well, indeed, that one does not often meet their equals!"

"But how did your finding the bed in the garret prove that my son and Canivet had put it there?"

"A little patience, if you please. The next day I declared I would confine the whole school until the

guilty parties were given up. I had not long to wait before I knew who were the culprits."

"My son is so generous," observed Mr. Bineau, "that he would take all the blame on himself."

"How like a father that is!" exclaimed Mr. Tanton; "but the truth is, the cook remembered seeing Louis prying about the kitchen all the day before, laying his plans, I suppose. I never mentioned anything of this before, because I did not want to plague you, but now after what has passed it is impossible to leave such a breach of the laws, for it is a breach, unpunished."

"Be satisfied, Mr. Tanton, such a thing will never happen again."

"Ah! well and good. Then you have given Louis a good scolding?"

"I have never said a word in the matter to him; but rest assured such a thing will never occur again. I have made up my mind—my son shall go to the College to-morrow."

"To the College!" cried Tanton.

"To the College. My decision is irrevocable."

"Well," said Tanton, "so long as Mr. Tassin only deprives me of such pupils as Louis, I shall not complain."

"You can boast of such a number of clever boys, I suppose," said Mr. Bineau, piqued.

"Exactly so," retorted Tanton. "I have a number, and many of them poor people's sons into the bargain, who are far superior to the sons of gentlemen."

"Take good care of your suburbans then, Mr. Tanton; for I promise you that the genteel families of Laon won't long leave their sons with *you* only to learn writing."

"Despise caligraphy!" exclaimed Mr. Tanton; "why, don't you know that there is not one of the clerks in the Prefecture who has not passed through my hands? and, since you force me to say it, believe me, I pity the parents of Master Louis from the bottom of my heart. That child has an instinctive knowledge of evil—he loves to plan it. If he appears quiet and good, be on your guard, for he is hatching some mischief. Some day, when it is too late, you will remember my words."

This conversation, which wounded Bineau to the quick, cost Mr. Tanton six day-scholars.

Mr. Canivet, the Judge of Instruction, sided with the Registrar, and sent his son also to the College, in order, as he said, not to separate him from little Bineau. The Sub-registrar, and the head clerk of Mr. Bineau's department, both thought it wise to imitate the conduct of their chief. During the two months yet remaining before the holidays, Mr. Bineau worked night and day to injure Tanton's school.

He represented it as a place where the children of the poor were set above those of the higher classes,—a proof, he said, of Tanton's own low extraction.

Tassin did not allow success to send him to sleep; each day brought about some amelioration in the College.

The two bursars, sons of mechanics, after a couple of months' teaching in the art of drumming, acquired terrific execution upon ass's skin; they beat the quick march like veterans, and filled the streets with their din.

In September, during the holidays, the amateur musicians of the town received a visit from a tall, well-made, elderly man, with eyes overhung by thick grey eyebrows, who wore a broad-brimmed hat, and had a certain bluntness of manner, well suited to his frank, good-humoured face; in short, having all the appearance of a professional man tired with the life of Paris, after having grown old in it. Mr. Ducrocq introduced himself to the amateur society as the ex-leader of the orchestra of the Circus in Paris, and now engaged as professor of music at the College, adding, that he came to offer his services to his co-musicians, if they would allow him to join their musical meetings.

Mr. Ducrocq arrived in the very nick of time. The last philharmonic society of Laon had just expired, and gone to join its departed sisters; there had never been an example of a musical society lasting more than a year. The small number of instrumentalists, their immense self-love and vanity, their deplorable want of talent, made them most ridiculous after the first moment of enthusiasm was over. It was impossible to lead or manage these wretched dilettanti, who might have taken lessons from the "Caveau des Aveugles."

The best music-master of the town was an idler, and a lounger in coffee-houses, who, for the sake of a game of billiards, would forget all about his pupils, leaving them to expect him in vain. Little Bineau's master was principally famed for his gentle and polite way of teaching, and for applauding the false notes of his scholars; while the third, Père Pollet, had fallen into his dotage; he did nothing but sleep, yet, by some inexplicable faculty, he was able to take the alto parts in the amateur quintetts, playing mechanically, even when fast asleep.

Mr. Ducrocq, with his tall figure, his thick eyebrows, and a certain military air which he had acquired when he was the head trumpeter of a regiment, appeared to the amateurs of the town like a Jupiter. They felt as if they had at last found an efficient conductor. The mixture of good nature and authority which characterized his few words was satisfactory, and the bringing Mr. Ducrocq to Laon was another lucky hit of the head-master of the College. As soon as the holidays were over, Mr. Tassin formed a sort of brass band, then quite a novelty, consisting of some cavalry and key-bugles. Little Bineau had a place assigned to him in this flourish of trumpets. All the musical scholars set to work with incredible zeal, and when they were strengthened by a trombone, and an ophicleide played by one of the under-masters, the band of the National Guard was forced to hide its diminished head.

In two months, with only two or three children, and some common brass instruments, Mr. Ducrocq managed to outvie in noise the big drum, kettle-drums, cymbals, and Chinese hats of the National Guard. This was a general remark at a review, where Mr. Tassin had obtained permission for his boys to appear in the suite of the civic guard.

The College boys performed their evolutions with as much precision and unity as the famous company of Voltigeurs commanded by Captain Maillefer. Neither must it be overlooked, that their peculiar uniform kept their ranks free of all little intruders in plain clothes.

Among other innovations due to Mr. Tassin's inventive genius, was one that quite overpowered the inhabitants of Laon—the appearance of the whole College, from the biggest to the smallest, in cocked hats. From students in philosophy, to the *Abecedarians*, all shewed themselves in this head-gear. The Commandant of the National Guard and the Prefect complimented Mr. Tassin upon the soldierlike carriage and discipline of his pupils; and the head-master in the elation of his joy, did not feel himself at all humiliated by appearing in the character of drum-major; for he had taken to marching himself at the head of his drummers, minus the plume to be sure, but not a whit the less proud for all that; he marked the time with his arms, and performed a hundred fooleries, that hitherto had appeared

impossible without a great silver-headed cane with large tassels.

The result of this parade was that Mr. Tassin was authorized to arm the oldest of his boys with a score of muskets which lay rusting in the cellars of the town-hall. Military exercises from that instant took a great lead in Mr. Tassin's university system; there was no end to musket drills, and inspections under the command of a veteran soldier—no end to the stretching and tuning of drums—no end to public and private rehearsals of the band. The martial din that arose in the College was enough to lead any one to suppose that war was raging, and that the long disused citadel in its close vicinity was once more teeming with soldiery.

CHAPTER II.

ESSAY ON THE FOOD MOST CONDUCIVE TO THE HEALTH OF SILK-WORMS—QUERY, TO PUT TO THE ACADEMY OF SCIENCES, ARE SEMINARIES, COLLEGES, AND SCHOOLS, USEFUL FOR THE MANUFACTURE OF SILK? AND ARE THEY NOT INJURIOUS TO SPECIAL MANUFACTURES?

LITTLE BINEAU having learnt nothing with Mr. Tanton, was consequently placed in the eighth class, in which elementary studies in French are continued, and the rudiments of Latin taught. His class-fellows were, his intimate friend Canivet, his cousin Theodore Lagache, the son of a farmer in the neighbourhood called Larmuzeaux, Dodin, the child of a mantua-maker in Laon, Robert and Cucquigny. These seven, without ever having had any previous intercourse, formed a group representing the seven capital sins. Dodin undertook, with the approbation of all, the special office of slipping into the best pastry-cooks' shops in the town, and carrying off the largest cakes he could see, while the others took up the attention of the person serving by pricing several things at once. It was he who discovered the best hiding-places, the gardens most out of the way, the

largest orchards with the sweetest apples, on which the little band of robbers pounced, leaving traces of its passage more terrible than if a set of Cossacks had bivouacked in them.

Once ensconced in one of the mountain grottos, eggs, apples, pears, nuts, artichokes, plums, in short, all their plunder was spread out on a pocket-handkerchief, and a blessing seemed to rest on their feasts, for none of the boys ever complained of indigestion afterwards.

John Larmuzeaux, a native of Sissonne, was undoubtedly born to be the laughing-stock of his play-fellows; he was sad-looking and pale, had a great nose, small eyes, and, above all, a pair of large ears, as flat and white as a sheet of paper, which seemed made on purpose to be pulled. They were ears which Nature had forgotten to turn down and hem, and had he lived they would certainly have figured among the items of his passport. Canivet, never a yard apart from Bineau, was the constructive, as Louis was the destructive genius.

Theodore Lagache had a speciality for locks and false keys, his aim being to penetrate the mysteries of school desks; he was both inventor and fabricator, and it was to him the college of Laon owed the introduction of silk-worms; nevertheless, nothing at the present day leads us to suppose that he first imported these useful insects. He and Bineau threw themselves, with the greatest ardour, into the business of breeding silk-worms. When Lagache brought his cousin a sheet of paper, on which

there were some little eggs, Bineau did not set much value on the gift.

"Be sure and take good care of them," said Lagache, who had a commercial turn.

Bineau was not a little surprised one fine summer day, on opening the box in which he had put these eggs, to see the worms pushing their heads out of their cases.

"Don't forget to ask your mother for the tenderest cabbage leaves," said Lagache, who, being a day boarder, could not get out of school so easily as his cousin, who went home to his meals. "You must choose the leaves nearest the heart, and we shall be very lucky if even they don't give the silk-worms a colic. We ought to have mulberry leaves, but I only know of two mulberry trees in the whole town; one we can't get at, but the other is in the garden of old Robertant."

"Robert will ask leave for us to gather some," returned Bineau, "though people say his father is a horrid miser."

This conversation took place during school time, when it was somewhat difficult to discuss at any length the subject of how to feed their silk-worms. Lagache wrote, "Are the mulberry trees in flower just now?" on a small slip of paper, which he rolled up, and by means of a quill-tube, a weapon he always had in his pocket, he hit Robert's nose with the paper ball. Robert, who was busily learning his lesson, looked up angrily to see who had attacked him, but a sly wink from Bineau

showed him that no hostility was meant. Robert tried to discover where the ball had fallen, and spied it under the reading-desk of the teacher of the class.

"Will you have the kindness to mend my pen, sir?" said he.

"Surely you are big enough to mend your own pens," replied the teacher, annoyed at being interrupted in reading a novel.

"I have forgotten my knife, sir."

"Then take mine; but remember to bring it back."

"I will give it to you directly, sir."

Robert did not very well know how to manage to pick up the ball, which had rolled pretty far under the reading-desk.

He loitered for a moment near the teacher, apparently entirely occupied with the nib of his pen; but as he gave back the knife he suddenly threw himself under the master's desk.

"What are you doing, Master Robert?" asked the usher.

"I am picking up the marrow of the new pen. I am going to eat it, sir, for every one says it gives a good memory."

"Go back to your seat, you goose!"

With the rapidity of the telegraphic system, a correspondence by means of balls of paper and quill-tubes was established between Robert, Lagache, and Bineau. Robert answered the question of "Are the mulberry

trees in blossom?" by these words, "The leaves are scarcely out." Bineau wrote back, "Can we get any leaves?"

"Papa won't give you any," answered Robert.

"But you can pick some yourself," wrote Lagache.

"No, I can't, for I am never left alone in the garden."

"Never mind, then," remarked Bineau to Lagache; "I'll bring some young cabbage-leaves."

"What do you know about it? cabbage-leaves will not keep good even for a week; silk-worms can't do without mulberry-leaves, they won't live."

During play hours the friends came to an agreement about the silk-worms. Lagache had a great many more than he could bring up in his own desk, so it was decided that each one of the seven should entertain for a time a certain number, and that a very safe place in each of their desks should be kept sacred to the little spinners. Lagache tried to impress on his associates the great necessity of leaving the silk-worms undisturbed during their infancy, of not troubling the mysteries of their growth by indiscreet curiosity, of attending to their cleanliness, of changing their food often, of keeping their leaves fresh, and, above all things, by unanimous agreement they were to avoid constantly raising the lids of their desks, otherwise the masters would soon find out what they were about, and proceed to a general confiscation and massacre. Canivet proposed, in case of a discovery, that they should have a second hiding-place

in each of their desks; the master would in all likelihood be satisfied with the destruction of the first he found, and never imagine there was a second.

A week passed thus, Bineau worrying his mother continually for young cabbage-leaves. At the end of that time Lagache took Bineau aside, and said, "Robert is a sneak not to get us some mulberry-leaves."

"That he is," replied Bineau.

"We must get some to-morrow somehow. It's no use trying to get on without; and all the trouble we have had goes for nothing, if we don't manage to get mulberry-leaves."

"I have talked it over with Canivet," answered Bineau, "but it seems downright impossible. Father Duplaquet's great mulberry-tree is close to his garden-wall —some of the branches even hang over into the street— well, we have thrown stones at them for a whole hour, and not one leaf would fall; they were too high to hit well."

"Do you know I have been told that there is a tree in the court-yard of the Seminary?" returned Lagache.

"Ha, ha!" cried Bineau; "but it's not so easy to get into the court-yard of the Seminary."

"The Seminarists' silk-worms must be very big by this time," said Lagache, with a deep sigh. "They get the best of everything, while ours are fed on horrid cabbage-leaves."

"I once thought of trying to get over the Seminary

wall," observed Bineau, "but I didn't dare. However, I'll go this evening to the ramparts with Robert and Canivet, and see what can be done."

"Robert is such a poor creature, he'll only be in your way."

"Let me alone for that. I have a plan in my head."

After school was over, Bineau said to Robert, as they were leaving, "Suppose we go home by the Promenade, and have a game at ball."

"With all my heart," answered Robert.

The game had not lasted five minutes when Canivet, who was in Bineau's secret, complained of the ball being too soft.

"It has just hit me," said he, "and it felt like a feather."

"Have you got your ball, Robert?"

"Yes, but it is an Indian-rubber one."

"Well, what does that signify?"

"Ah! but it is a dear ball, and if you lose it"—

"When did you ever hear of a ball being lost?" said Canivet.

"Yes, but it might though. It may bound off the rampart down to the Promenade, and roll to the very bottom of the mountain. It's a ball that cost me sixpence," added Robert, pulling it out of his pocket as if to prove its value.

Bineau made a snatch at it. "Give it to me," he said.

"No, no," cried Robert, putting it back into his pocket. "Papa would never give me another if I lost this."

"I go bail for it," said Canivet. "You know I have one twice as big; I left it in my desk. Mine bounds as high as a house."

"Then if you lose mine, you promise to give me yours instead?"

Canivet stopped, made a cross with his foot on the pavement, and said, "I have made a cross upon it—now give me the ball."

Robert, who was very mischievous, waited till he was within five paces of Canivet, when, well aware of the hardness of his ball, he sent it with all his strength against the other's back.

"Ah, you coward!" cried Canivet, feigning to be in a great passion; "but I'll pay you off—here's for your fine ball;" and, so saying, he threw it over the wall of the Seminary which was close by.

For an instant Robert was thunderstruck; but when Canivet declared that he would not give him his ball in exchange, he burst into a violent fit of crying.

"You may be very thankful, you rascal," cried Canivet, "that I don't give you a good beating into the bargain."

"I'll tell papa of you," sobbed Robert, leaning against the wall, refusing to move a step, and looking up as if tracing in the air the curve made by the lost ball.

"Do, if you like, and I'll show what you have done to my back. I am sure it will be black and blue for a week."

Little Bineau now thought proper to interpose as a peacemaker between the disputants.

"Come, Robert, don't go on crying," said he; "after all, the ball is not lost. Canivet only meant to frighten you a little. Let us go now and ask leave to look for it in the court-yard of the Seminary."

This hope dried Robert's tears, and the three accordingly retraced their steps.

"You are too good by half, Bineau," observed Canivet, "to trouble yourself about a Rober*tant*."

"Don't call me that. If you do, I'll tell Mr. Tassin."

"Much Mr. Tassin cares for a *Robertant*," returned Canivet.

"We'll see that to-morrow."

The nickname of Robertant (Robert-so-much) was too well known in Laon not to have reached the ears of all the boys in the College. Mr. Robert, little Robert's father, had the reputation of being the greatest miser in the department. All sorts of stories were current concerning him, but the one most relished was about a legacy he had managed to obtain from a very old woman, a distant relation of his own. The wags of Laon declared, that when this venerable lady was on her deathbed, Mr. Robert, every time that she said the words, in making her will, "I give to Mr. ——," always suggested the

name Robert. "Ah, yes! Robert," continued the dying woman, who was fast losing her faculties. Mr. Robert would then prompt her by saying "*tant*," (so much,) writing down opposite the sum named.

These facts got wind, and some one by chance having wedded the name to the adverb of quantity, the surname Rober*tant* sprung up, stuck to the miser for the rest of his life, and was inherited afterwards by his son.

"Very well, since you mean to tell tales of us to Mr. Tassin, we won't go after your ball. Come along with me, Bineau, let's leave him alone."

"I won't tell," bawled out Robert, "if you will find my ball."

"While he is looking for his ball in the yard," whispered Bineau to his friend, "try to break off one of the branches of the mulberry-tree, and, that we may not be seen carrying it out, throw it over the wall."

The whole plot, however, was completely baffled by the porter of the Seminary, who not only would not permit the three collegians to enter the court, but positively refused to give back the ball unless they paid a penny. This was a tax to which the Seminarists themselves had to submit, who, in the heat of play, sent their balls over the wall. The porter was authorized to pay a penny to every urchin who brought back a ball.

Now Bineau only received a penny twice a week, on Sundays and Thursdays, which he always squandered with the greatest thoughtlessness whenever the school

walked to a neighbouring farm. Besides, being already in debt, he had no inclination to bestow the penny in his pocket on Robert. Canivet, who had about the same income as Louis, spent it much in the same foolish fashion. In this way, then, for having refused his schoolfellows some mulberry leaves, the unlucky Robert lost his Indian-rubber ball; he did not say much, but he owed them a grudge ever after.

During the whole of the following morning, Bineau behaved remarkably well in the class; he was meditating how to achieve the conquest of some mulberry leaves. At mid-day, he went by himself to the Promenade, and stopped for a considerable time opposite the great wall of the seminary. He studied its proportions with the attention of an architect, evidently overwhelmed by its height and by the broken bottles ranged on the top, glistening in a manner sufficient to deter the most audacious from climbing over.

He did not stay five minutes at home to eat his breakfast, but set off again full gallop to the ramparts, to carry into execution a deep-laid scheme. By the time he reached his destination it was one o'clock, the hour when schoolboys and apprentices all breakfast, and a dozen little fellows, quite on the alert to gain the pennies paid by the Seminary porter for the balls picked up outside, were ranged in a line opposite the wall.

Scarcely had Bineau joined this party, when a badly aimed ball fell on the rampart. A dreadful scuffle en-

sued among the young ragamuffins; they fought with hands and feet in a marvellous manner for the prize. The fight was at its height, when Bineau's attention was attracted by hearing a voice exclaim, "Three-half-pence for the one who gives me the ball directly!" The voice seemed to come out of the wall. As he looked, a stone was removed as if by magic, making a narrow loophole through which the Seminarists could themselves bargain with the finders of their balls. The bargain was immediately concluded, the ball exchanged for the three-half-pence, and the stone restored to its place among its brethren. The Seminarists had a twofold advantage in treating with the enemy themselves; in the first place, their game was not interrupted; and secondly, as the Seminary Cerberus always exacted a premium for himself, there was a considerable saving in money.

Bineau reached the academy very well satisfied that his hour's meditation on the rampart had not been thrown away. "What a pity," was his first observation, "that I am not thin enough to pass through that hole!"

"What!" cried Lagache, "would you have the courage to go into the Seminary court-yard at night?"

"To be sure," answered Bineau, "and so would Canivet, for there must be two of us."

"Well, then, we can easily make the hole larger," said Lagache.

"Yes, if we had the proper tools."

"I'll engage you shall have some to-night, but don't

forget one thing; when we are out walking, cut two strong sticks in the wood as you go along; they must be stout enough to serve as levers. I'll bring the tools."

The conversation would possibly have lasted much longer, had the friends not been startled by the roll of a drum—a warning to prepare for parade.

"Oh dear!" cried Bineau, "I shall be too late, I haven't got my horn."

Away he ran to the music-room, took down his horn, and in less than five minutes had on all his trappings, even to the string of spare keys round his neck, and was in his place by the side of Mr. Ducrocq, who was blowing a small clarionet with all his might, the shrill sounds being intended as a signal for Louis.

"Here he is! here's Bineau!" screamed the whole band, delighted at the arrival of their colleague, for Bineau was, perhaps, their best player. His cocked hat once on his head, his horn under his arm, his musician's bag by his side, Louis became a steady, serious, responsible being, instead of a tricksy little buffoon. Mr. Ducrocq always cited him as a perfect model to the others, and, assuredly, never treated him with the same severity he did the rest of his pupils.

"Where were you, you young rogue?" asked Mr. Tassin, pinching Bineau's ear, as soon as he appeared, in a very friendly manner.

"I could not find my mouthpiece, sir."

"Ah! that alters the case. Mr. Ducrocq, are we ready?"

"Quite at your service, Mr. Tassin."

"Well then, march!"

The wood of Sauvoir, where the Collegians always went at least once a week, is about half a league from Laon. There is a steep descent from the promenade just opposite the public washing-house, by which it can be reached in twenty-five minutes or half-an-hour. This road, called De la Sablière, is hollowed out between two mountains; it is an immense wild zig-zag, full of quarries not yet converted by the inhabitants of the town into gardens.

The distance might be considerably shortened by a bold run down a great sand hill, rising at a right angle with the ground,—a goat-path greatly in favour with every child, but one strictly forbidden by Mr. Tassin, not, however, on account of its being dangerous, but because it would do away with any necessity for marching through the town. The Principal preferred passing by the Luceau gate, showing off his company of Collegians on the great mountain of Vaux, awaking its echoes with the roll of his drums, and exciting the admiration of the gay world, taking the air under the lime-trees, by the military evolutions of his pupils.

This lengthened the road by a good half-mile, but the effect the Principal wished for was produced. The ostensible object of the walk was the wood of Sauvoir, belonging to the town, treated with but little respect by the Collegians, who, to get at birds' nests, had imagined all sorts of contrivances, in general fatal to the trees.

Within a stone's throw of the wood, stands the farm of Sauvoir, where, for a halfpenny, each of the boys were allowed to drink as much milk, warm from the cow, as they could swallow. Each of them brought a piece of bread in his pocket, and those who were lucky enough to receive fivepence twice a week, had a regular feast at the farm, while those who had no income managed by plunder to satisfy their ravenous appetites.

Lagache took advantage of the word of command, "Break your ranks," to make his escape into the open country; with the greatest indifference trampling down the growing corn, or running over newly-sown fields, he made straight as the crow flies for the Cathedral, the pointed spire of which shoots up into the clouds. In less than a quarter of an hour he was in Laon, and got into the College by climbing over a little wall on the ramparts. Knowing all the ways of the house, he was not afraid of being discovered. He ran to the school-room and opened his desk. There was such a quantity of keys in it, that it looked more like a locksmith's box than a schoolboy's desk. Lagache snatched up some keys, and without any hesitation went to the richest boarder's desk. He gave it first a good shake to try and guess from the noise what it contained; there was a distinct jingling of iron. A look of delight spread over Lagache's face, but unfortunately none of his keys would open the padlock. He endeavoured to pull out the staples, but they were too firmly riveted in—he then tried what kicks would do, but his

foot only hit the wooden lid of the desk, making a fearful noise in the empty room. All at once Lagache started,—he had heard a footstep on the stair. He glanced round in the hope of seeing a means of escape—but there was none. Believing himself lost, he made a desperate effort, and forced himself under the master's pulpit or reading-desk, which was but slightly raised above the school-room floor, and thus caught himself as if in a rat-trap. This device saved him. The porter, who had been sweeping out the upper floor, hearing a noise below, had come down to see what it could be. He looked all round the room, saw nothing, of course, never imagining that any one could be hid below the pulpit, so spare the space and so heavy the desk, it would have appeared like madness to seek such a hiding-place. Nevertheless, the porter thought it only prudent to double lock the door of the room. So Lagache was doubly imprisoned under the pulpit and in the room.

In this sad situation he reflected that it would have been better for him to have remained in the wood, to have had a game at "prison bars," drunk milk, climbed trees, and rather late in the day began to repent of his attempted burglary: he even cursed the silk-worms, which had been the cause of his being boxed up so tightly. He could scarcely move, his head was actually on the ground. The terror of being caught in the very act of a robbery had apparently shrunk up all his limbs. He was coiled up like a ball under the pulpit, and un-

able to get out again. By dint of struggling he at last pushed out his left leg, which he moved about to try and bring back feeling, for it was fast asleep. In doing this his foot hit some obstacle, which, whatever it was, by a dexterity almost marvellous, he managed to bring under the pulpit; it chanced to be a *Gradus ad Parnassum*. The obstacle now became a most effectual ally.

Recovering his courage, he put all his strength into his back, and succeeded in raising the pulpit a little. Having found a brick beside him, he slipped it under one of the legs, and thus obtained a little more breathing room, but so little that one must have been in his situation to be able to appreciate its value properly. A new effort of his loins enabled him to place another piece of brick under another leg.

The difficulty now was not to get from under the reading-desk, but to do so without upsetting it. After some more struggles Lagache inserted the *Gradus ad Parnassum* under one of the sides of the desk, and then with the science of a wrestler striving to free his head from an adversary's grasp, the prisoner was once more at liberty in the school-room, and that without having awakened suspicion.

Determined not to lose the benefit of his imprisonment, he went back to his school-fellow's desk, which he had so longed to open, and this time set more cleverly to work. With his penknife he cut away the wood round the staples to which the padlock was fastened.

The burglary was obvious, but he did not care for that; for on raising the desk-lid his eye had lighted on a hammer, a chisel, and various tools, which testified to their owner being addicted to carpentering. With the screw-driver Lagache easily undid the screws of the lock of the door, so carefully secured by the porter, and, loaded with his valuable booty, the thief left the College with the same facility with which he had entered it. He even took less time to return to his companions than he had taken to get to the College, for he bounded down the mountain with all the velocity of a stone falling from the top of the cathedral. He was just in time, for as he came to the farm Mr. Tassin was beginning the roll-call.

"Look here," said he to Bineau, "I have got what will make a hole in the wall of the Seminary, and we will make it to-night."

At eight o'clock that evening, and when it was quite dark, Lagache and Bineau began to work at loosening the stones round the loophole through which the Seminarists carried on their bargains for the recovery of their balls, while Canivet and Cucquigny kept watch on each side of the rampart.

"It is more difficult than I expected," whispered Lagache to Bineau; "try if your stick won't raise up this stone."

But the stick broke without moving the stone in the least. The two sentinels came to relieve the two la-

bourers, who fatigued themselves without obtaining any success.

"We shall never manage it this way," said they all, after having broken two penknives against the stones. "We must have a pickaxe."

"We can do very well without a pickaxe," answered Bineau, "only we must have patience."

"It will take a week at least," said Cucquigny; "and it's so late, that I am sure of a good scolding from my uncle when I get home."

"Well, go along," cried Lagache, "we don't want you any more; the thing's impossible."

"We are not very good at the business, certainly," said little Bineau; "for here we have been a whole hour without moving even one stone of this horrid wall. And, after all, if we were once on the other side, who knows what might happen, for I have been told that the porter lets loose great dogs at night. I have no mind to be bitten—so there's no use in staying here any longer."

"You give it up then altogether?" asked Lagache. "You forget that the silk-worms are dying."

"No, I don't give it up altogether," answered Bineau; "only I remember, that not ten steps further on there is old Duplaquet's garden, in which there is a famous mulberry tree. We were fools not to think of it sooner."

"That's true."

"But you have forgotten the moat," said Canivet.

"That needn't stop us. One of us can stand in it, and lend a back to the others."

"Let's go at once," said Bineau, "to Father Robertant's garden."

The escalade was not without danger, for the wall rose a considerable height above the moat. It had, however, a slant, and being part of the old fortifications of the citadel, time had destroyed the mortar in many places, which might serve on an emergency for steps. The darkness of the night, too, concealed the danger, and the same person who, in the day-time, would never have dared to scale this wall, would have done it at night without fear.

Bineau, though short and slight, was by no means famous in gymnastic exercises. He only displayed his agility in making good use of his legs in running away from any danger. He was even unable to climb a tree. Lagache, on the contrary, who was much taller, would have made a capital fireman; besides, he was working for himself, so he did not hesitate to execute the plan conceived by Bineau.

Canivet supported him on his shoulders, and, in a very few minutes, the shades of night hid him from the sight of his companions, who could only guess at what he was doing by the noise made by two large branches of the mulberry-tree in falling.

"Oh dear, oh dear!" cried Bineau, "they are too big: we shall be found out to a certainty."

"Nonsense," said Canivet.

"Robert will be sure to peach."

"He won't know that it is us."

"Ah! we were very wrong to talk before him so much about his father's mulberry-tree."

"As for that," cried Bineau, "we are not the only ones who have silk-worms!"

Lagache soon returned safe and sound, and the stripping of the branches was done in the twinkling of an eye. Every one had a share of the leaves, and was advised by Lagache to procure a pot full of fresh sand, in order to keep the leaves fresh.

CHAPTER III.

DODIN A COOK—HIS INVENTIONS—TANTONIANS AND TASSINISTS—COMMERCE ALWAYS A ROBBERY—THE UNIVERSITY ESTABLISHES A PRIZE FOR THE BREEDING OF SILK-WORMS.

THE breeding of the silk-worms went on with great success, except in Dodin's case, who would not follow Lagache's advice. He was for ever opening his desk and holding up the lid with his head, spending minutes in deep contemplation of what was going on in the inside. Dodin had a mania for cooking. He liked rich dishes, and during class-time would plan culinary combinations, which he put into execution during the hours destined for the preparation of lessons.

The bottom of his desk was most ingeniously contrived for cooking. He had a store of apples, pears, and sugar in it—a little bottle of orange-flower water, small knives, plates, and spoons. Nothing could persuade Dodin to give up his gastronomic pursuits in favour of silk-worms, and he considered he had made an enormous sacrifice in assigning a third of his kitchen to the service of his friends.

The fireplace of Dodin's kitchen was composed of

three bricks supporting a shallow delf-cup full of coarse grease, with a wick in the middle, commonly used in illuminations, and which was lighted on great feast days. By means of this lamp the different ingredients contained in a little tin saucepan were cooked, and, by three o'clock in the afternoon, everything being ready, Dodin, with all sorts of precaution, would empty the tin pan, divide its contents into ten equal portions, place them on ten tin plates, and, with an excess of generosity, send a portion round to each of his friends.

Though very small, these bonbouches showed what a creative genius Dodin possessed; and the shop of the celebrated Swiss pastry-cook, lately opened in Laon, had no cake which could vie with Dodin's wonderful productions, always extravagantly sweet. The discovery of the kitchen took place on one particular day when Dodin had bethought himself of a new mixture of pears cut in slices, with chips of toasted bread, green anise-seed, and, as a finish-off in the best taste, a few drops of orange-flower water, and a sprinkling of sugar. But such a rich combination made him put his head too often inside his desk, not to mention that the continual raising of the lid caused a smell of cooking to spread through the school-room.

"Young gentlemen," said the usher, "some one has been smoking anise-seed here again. If this happens any more, and you do not name the smoker, I will keep you all in after school."

This apostrophe made Dodin shudder, though he was not guilty of smoking anise-seed,—a passion exclusively indulged in by the bigger boys of the fifth class. Greatly alarmed, he remained quiet for nearly a quarter of an hour, keeping one ear on the desk-lid, in order to ascertain if his pan was not boiling too quickly, for he was afraid it might run over, spread through the desk like an opened sluice, make a smell, spoil his papers, and drown the silk-worms.

The usher, on his side, had a passion for novels. He regularly devoured four volumes a day; and Dodin seeing him again absorbed in his book, was imprudent enough to open his desk. He shut it quickly, but a strong smell of anise-seed had issued forth. "Gentlemen, some one is smoking here!" exclaimed the usher, closing his book abruptly.

Those boys who were not Dodin's friends looked significantly at him,—a jesuitical way of accusing a schoolfellow without appearing to do so. Dodin looked confused. The usher, warned by the looks he had seen, left his reading-desk, and began to examine the countenances of those he suspected, but when he came near Dodin, a little cloud of smoke, which was escaping through the holes of the inkstand, put the master at once on the right track. He fell like a bomb on the desk, opened it, and shut it again as quickly, uttering a violent exclamation. The usher thought he was about to be suffocated, such a smell of rancid fat, of hot

clay, of anise-seed, came from the little fireplace heated to excess.

"Leave the room, Dodin!" shouted the usher, who had mustered courage to extinguish the fire by blowing out the lamp, while all the boys, even Dodin's intimates, laughed at his misfortune.

"But—sir!—" said Dodin, in an entreating voice.

"Leave the room directly, I tell you!"

Dodin went out, feeling sure that a search in his desk could not but make the matter worse. In fact, the usher, finding the cooking utensils, the mess cooking, the silk-worms, the pot with the mulberry-leaves, in a perfect fury threw them all out of the window, first breaking everything to pieces. At first, the rest of the boys had laughed, but they soon became grave enough, fearing that such an unexpected discovery might lead the usher to make perquisitions elsewhere.

The one who was in the greatest terror was Larmuzeaux, who kept a frog in his desk, and who would rather have given ten years of his life than see it put to death. Bineau having got leave to go out for a few minutes, at first sought in vain for Dodin, but at last found him in the little court, hid behind a pile of wood. He had concealed himself, because he dreaded meeting the head master.

To be ordered out during school hours was a terrible punishment, and one which was infallibly augmented, whenever Mr. Tassin found the banished one wander-

ing in the neighbourhood of his class, like a soul in purgatory.

The ushers had to give in to the head-master a bulletin of all the severe punishments inflicted; but happily for the scholars of the eighth class, the usher who performed the office of professor, his head full of novels, often forgot to put down in writing what had occurred, and there was a great chance of escaping any further severity, if a boy did not meet Mr. Tassin.

"It's all your fault," said Bineau, "with your greediness."

"That is just like you," exclaimed Dodin, "to take the usher's part."

"What business had you," retorted Bineau, "to be cooking? just see, how nearly we were all found out through you; if it hadn't been for the smell, which betrayed you, the usher would have searched all our desks, and there would have been an end of the silk-worms."

"It's over now," returned Dodin; "so don't let's think any more about the matter. Have you time enough to play a game of six balls?"

"Hardly," said Bineau; "yet one game is soon done."

The game of six balls consists of six marbles, which the player holds in the palm of his right hand, and of which he is to send two, four, or six into a hole in the ground, called "the pot." When there is an uneven number, the player loses, and of course gains when the contrary is the case. The game was at its height when

ing with you, shall fetch your breakfast for his punishment."

Bineau breathed more freely, happy to escape at so easy a rate from the schoolmaster's anger.

After class a council was held by the heads of the Silk-worm Company, who judged it prudent to abandon for the future all pillage of Mr. Robert's garden and mulberry tree.

"I lay anything," said Bineau, "that Robert accused us. He is a tell-tale; and he shall pay for it, the hypocrite!"

But though little Robert was condemned as guilty of double dealing, it was nevertheless decided that for the present he should be left alone, Bineau promising to devise a punishment for the traitor. A great rivalry naturally existed between Mr. Tanton's school and Mr. Tassin's college, and battles continually took place between the day-scholars of the two establishments, when they met on the promenade before class hours. Bineau, in particular, was excessively vindictive against his former writing-master. The mulberry-tree expedition being at an end, he turned all his thoughts to devise ways to tease those he called "Tantonians," in contradistinction to the nickname of "Tassinists," which had been given to the College boys.

For some days past Bineau had crept unobserved into Mr. Tanton's court-yard, and found means to ring the bell which announced the hours of breakfast, dinner,

and supper to the writing-master's pupils. This bell made a terrific noise, for Mr. Tanton had thought fit to compete with Mr. Tassin's drums, by increasing the bulk of his bell and the size of its clapper. The attempt succeeded wonderfully the first time—the whole writing-class had jumped up with shouts of joy at their release an hour sooner than usual; and in vain did Mr. Tanton vociferate and thump the table; he heard the lids of the desks resolutely shut down to the accompaniment of the ringing of his great bell.

Bineau had time to make his escape without being seen; besides, he was so well acquainted with every nook and corner there, that it would not have been difficult for him to find a hiding-place that would have set at defiance all search. Canivet, Lagache, Robert, and Dodin waited for him at the gate, and congratulated him on the success of the undertaking.

The next day Bineau repeated his ringing with great bravery, and so on for several days. Each day's success added to the four friends' transport of delight; they returned home very happy.

"To-morrow," said Bineau to Robert, "don't forget to bring plenty of string; you will see something funny. If I have a bit of string I'll ring on for half-an-hour at least without any danger."

Robert had a packet of new pens, which he undid, and to the astonishment of every one showed great generosity this time.

"That's not all," said Bineau; "we'll slip into Tanton's court-yard; I'll go up to the first floor, while you tie the string to the bell-chain. You must fasten a stone to the other end of the string, throw it up to me, and then run away."

"But suppose I am seen?" said Robert.

"Nonsense, there is no danger of that; besides, I am going to ring the bell, and not you."

Robert allowed himself to be persuaded, though he shuddered with fear as he made good his entrance into Tanton's yard. He followed Bineau's instructions to the letter, and was in the very act of fastening the string to the bell-chain, when he was nearly felled by a tremendous blow on the back, dealt with an enormous broom, and felt his unlucky ears in the vice-like grasp of a pair of vigorous well-known stumps, with the terrible thumb. Mr. Tanton, sorely puzzled how the audacious ringer always escaped him, had been on the watch for the last two days.

"You rascal," cried Tanton, "I have caught you at last, have I? and I'll keep you, too, till you are asked for."

A sudden burst of laughter, which Robert knew could come from no one but Bineau, put a climax to the terror he already felt at Tanton's threat. His betrayer, who had laid his plans beforehand, escaped by the roof of one of the buildings, which looked into a lane.

Mr. Tanton dragged his prisoner into the school-room,

and made him undergo an examination before all the scholars. Robert denounced Bineau as the author of the plot, and did not hesitate to compromise his friends who were waiting for him outside the gate. But notwithstanding his tears, and the system of justification he had adopted, the writing-master did not trouble himself about the rest of the mischievous gang, whom he had not seen, and let the whole weight of his vengeance fall on the head of the one in his power. Having written out a minute of the events, Mr. Tanton desired his assistant to make two copies of it, and to carry one to the Mayor of the town, and the other to Robert's father. At half-past eight that evening, Mr. Robert, senior, received the following message, written in an admirable round hand:—

"SIR,—For the last eight days, the bell of my establishment has been regularly heard (contrary to all custom) at seven in the evening. This unusual ringing has caused the greatest disorder in my classes of writing, orthography, and arithmetic. I therefore resolved to discover the malefactor. For this purpose I hid myself for several evenings behind my great gate, but the disturber of the peace, endowed with great agility, always succeeded in escaping my pursuit. It was only this day, the eighth March, that I seized the criminal at the very instant in which he was fixing some string to the bell-chain, but for what purpose I am ignorant. The culprit's name is Gregory Robert, eleven years of age,

son of Mr. Robert of Laon, gentleman. I have examined him publicly in the presence of all my pupils, not only to serve as a warning to them, but to prevent my being accused of putting falsely into my report facts which cannot fail to awaken suspicion, that this outrage was instigated by some one of importance. Probably, Master Robert is merely the instrument, and not the soul; but I leave to the magistrates the duty of discovering, whether the rivalship existing between two establishments is not a cause of undue excitement for the boys of the College. Master Robert asserts his innocence, though I positively caught him in the very act of trying to increase the length of the chain of my bell, by joining to it some red cord. He has named his accomplices, of whom one, the contriver of the whole plot, according to Master Robert, entered my premises, while the others watched at the gate. But it is impossible for me to engage in so complicated an inquiry without the friendly co-operation of the Principal of the College, who hitherto has refused to join me in my endeavours to put an end to the constant war between his scholars and mine. I have the honour to inform you, sir, that two copies of this report have been made, one sent to the father of the culprit, the natural judge in such a matter, and the other addressed to the Mayor of the town of Laon, in order that that admirable administrator of the laws may be able to judge for himself of the wrongs and annoyances inflicted by an unseen

hand on one of those under the honourable Mayor's jurisdiction, and one who ventures to sign himself his devoted fellow-citizen,—TANTON."

"Robert must have caught it well," said Bineau, when he rejoined his companions on the ramparts.

"So much the better," said Lagache; "a tell-tale can't get too much. But look at your trousers, Bineau."

Then, for the first time, Bineau perceived the disasters caused by his flight over the roofs of the houses. The three most susceptible places of boys' clothes, those rendered by each day's secret action more and more sensitive, had not been able to resist the attack of the sharp tiles. The back and knees of his trousers, and the sleeves of his coat, had all burst.

"What shall I say to them at home?" cried Bineau, this discovery restoring all his presence of mind.

"If I were you," said Canivet, "I would go to bed at once without saying anything, and then you'll have till to-morrow morning to make up a story."

"Well, I don't care," replied Bineau; "they must mend them—that's all. I'll say I fell from a tree."

When Mr. Tanton's formula of accusation reached Mr. Robert, though the writing was like print, that gentleman could scarcely believe his own eyes. As for his son's being really guilty, that was quite out of the question, and, hastening at once to the preparatory schoolmaster, he asked him pretty roughly how he dared to imprison or detain a child over whom he had no

authority. The boy, crying bitterly, persisted in his assertions of innocence, and the father upheld the son. The enraged Mr. Tanton declared he would seek redress from the public tribunals; but the schoolmaster had to do with an enemy far his superior in strength.

In everything true to his reputation for prudence and unwillingness to open his purse, Mr. Robert had obtained the fourth of a scholarship for his son. It was, therefore, plainly his own interest to support the College and its Principal on all occasions, and against every one. Being a cousin also of the Mayor of Laon, who at that time possessed great influence over the municipal council, on leaving Mr. Tanton, Mr. Robert went straight to that functionary's house to see him before he could have come to any decision upon the schoolmaster's report. There was precisely on this evening a small reception at the Mayor's.

"It is a most disgraceful attack," began Mr. Robert at once. "No doubt, cousin, you have received a report from Mr. Tanton; but tell me first, how are you?"

"This affair is no business of mine!" exclaimed the Mayor, somewhat haughtily. "Mr. Tanton appears to take me for a Commissary of Police."

"But believe me, my dear cousin, my son is quite innocent."

"I make no doubt of it."

"It was little Bineau, with his friend Canivet, and that good-for-nothing Lagache, who played the trick."

"What does it signify?" said the Mayor, coolly.

"Pardon me, cousin; but I should be so sorry that you should take a prejudice against my son, one of the best-disposed children in the world, and whom I am doing my best to preserve from all bad examples."

"Your son is, I daresay, a very fine boy, Mr. Robert," replied the Mayor drily, and in a manner that plainly enough showed he wished to put an end to the conversation.

No further notice was taken of this affair, and Bineau and his friends enjoyed the satisfaction of having revenged themselves on the tell-tale. Notwithstanding all sorts of casualties, the raising of silk-worms went on with tolerable success. The breeders were shortly able to display to their admiring companions worms in excellent health, and appeasing their hunger with great zeal.

Lagache now set up business as dealer in caterpillars, at a halfpenny the dozen. This low price was a very tempting bait to the inexperienced in the art of rearing silk-worms. "The Company" refused to enter into a contract for furnishing food, and, as the day-scholars alone had the power of procuring mulberry-leaves, the boarders soon saw their purchases die of hunger. Lagache laid the whole blame of this misfortune on the stupidity of his customers, and attained his end of inducing them to lay in a new stock, and at a higher price. Now, however, he sold his worms at a penny the dozen,

because he affirmed that, during the interval, they had grown larger and fatter. This new sale brought about a temporary reconciliation between Lagache and Robert.

"What was that precious ball worth which you lost on the ramparts?" asked Lagache.

"Fivepence," replied Robert, mournfully.

"Would you like to get back your fivepence?"

"To be sure I would," replied Robert, more cheerfully.

"And fivepence more into the bargain?" asked Lagache; "think now, a whole franc! Well, do you know, I am going to give you a franc."

"Oh!" exclaimed Robert. "Oh!" in a tone that showed he was his father's own son.

"You won't cry about it, I see."

"But where is the franc?" asked Robert, in a voice full of suspicion; "I don't believe you ever had one in all your life." Lagache quietly put his hand in his pocket, and drew out a handkerchief with a knot at each corner. He first undid one knot, and took out a half-franc, and so on with the other three, until four half-francs were displayed before Robert's covetous eyes, who kept on exclaiming, "Oh, oh!" as one after the other of the little silver coins was laid down on the pavement.

"Do you believe now that I can give you a franc if I choose?" inquired Lagache triumphantly.

"Yes, yes!" cried Robert, hardly able to speak.

"You great big fool!" said Lagache, "you might have had it long ago, if you hadn't gone and told tales of us."

"But I didn't," began Robert.

"Don't tell lies," cried Lagache, interrupting him, "because I know you peached; but that's over now. We don't care a straw for you or your father; we can get as many mulberry-leaves as we want without being caught."

This was exactly what little Robert had been wondering at for the last few days, saying to himself constantly, "How do they manage?" without being able to solve the question.

"If you wish to have this franc," continued Lagache, "you must promise that, for a whole fortnight, you will bring me as many leaves as I require. They are not for myself, but for the boarders, to whom you must sell fifty leaves at a time. Do you agree?"

"And if papa finds me out?"

"If you are such a coward, you won't have the franc —that's all."

"Very well, then," said Robert, "I'll do it."

"But remember, you are only to sell the mulberry-leaves when I tell you. I won't have the other boys' silk-worms get on as fast as mine."

"I'll do just what you please."

"It isn't I only who give you this commission to do, for Bineau, Canivet, and Dodin go partners with me."

In less than a week Lagache's trade prospered to such a degree, that the College was full of silk-worms. One or two deliveries of goods did not at all satisfy Lagache; he was always wanting to make fresh sales. To effect this, he had recourse to all sorts of stratagems, one of which was, under pretext of giving advice, to keep his head so long under the lid of his victim's desk as to attract the usher's attention, who would pounce down upon and make a massacre of innocents, which, however, seemed to set at nought his every effort to extirpate them. Another of Lagache's tricks was, by the aid of false keys, to steal back the very goods he had sold, or else to shake the desk so violently as to upset all the books and ink inside on the backs of the fragile silk-spinners, and thus send them out of the world.

Robert became perfectly reconciled to the three friends whenever his trade had brought him in the franc he so ardently coveted; but he made many a wry face when he had to pay to the Company's cashier the overplus produced by the sale of the leaves. The prize silk-worms were in Lagache's desk, who displayed with great pride several nearly as large as his little finger. These fine creatures sold as high as a quarter of a franc, or twopence halfpenny the pair, and a day rarely passed without the Company selling at least a couple; for the first buyers, those who had purchased eggs, found it impossible to make theirs grow to anything like such a size.

Lagache's enterprise was thus sailing before the wind.

He had perfectly well calculated that bad food, want of care, the penetration of the usher, and, at need, theft and murder, would effectually prevent all those not belonging to "The Company" from succeeding. Though the business slackened a little when the worm became a chrysalis, it still prospered. In its new state the worm was neither ornamental nor amusing; but Canivet, who had a mechanical genius, gave a new impetus to the trade by inventing a little machine for winding silk, and the demand from every class very soon exceeded the supply.

All the desks, from the eighth to the fifth class, were turned into silk-spinning factories, and the manufacturers of Lyons would have been surprised by the extraordinary industry of these young workmen.

Larmuzeaux was the Silk-worm Company's last victim. Bineau sold him three pounds of guano, and persuaded him that, if pounded in a mortar, it would become a powder, with which he could make the most lovely green imaginable.

Thus passed the year 1830, full of promise to the College, to Mr. Tassin, and to his scholars. Bineau received a prize for music, but Lagache fell a victim to favouritism; for the Principal, who had established prizes for almost everything, entirely overlooked one for the breed of silk-worms.

CHAPTER IV.

PROFESSOR DELTEIL APPEARS ON THE STAGE—EFFECTS OF A DOGGREL— DODIN GOES ON WITH HIS COOKING.

CLOSE to the Vaux gate there is a shop on which these words are painted, "Paris Fashions—Mesdemoiselles Carillon, Milliners." The front consists of two windows, the display in which certainly does not justify the above inscription. In one of the windows are conspicuous the head and shoulders of a pasteboard doll, with great light-blue eyes, that seem to be calmly contemplating the passers-by; the hair concealed by a yellow leather cap, intended to serve as a pincushion. At the side of the inquisitive doll are four white mushroom-shaped cap-blocks, in all their naked ugliness, huddled together as if to make head against a larger and more successful rival, on which is perched a very coquettish-looking cap.

In a wide shallow pasteboard box are arranged several rolls of ribbons, more gaudy than pretty, most of them flowered or shot with two violently contrasted colours —balls of cotton, skeins of silk, hanks of braid, or cord, form the rest of the show in this window.

In the other are sets of violin strings, a glass flute, and

a few songs, the yellow paper of which proves they are very old shopkeepers.

Three sisters of the name of Carillon kept this shop, which had at one time excited one of those ephemeral effervescences to which we have said Laon was subject. A wretched doggrel verse had been written in white chalk on one of the shop-shutters, and perhaps in no other place in the world would such insignificant words have drawn any attention, much less produced any serious consequences; but it is necessary to go back a few years, and to explain that during the reign of Louis XVIII., this millinery business, under the management of Widow Carillon, gave very good returns, which were spent on the education of her three daughters, in assisting those less fortunate than herself, and in perhaps too liberal a style of housekeeping.

The widow sent her daughters to a convent in Soissons, allowed them to learn the pianoforte and singing, and did not bring them home till 1827. After that Madame Carillon quietly died, leaving her daughters no other fortune than her house and the shop on the ground floor. Madame Carillon had never dreamed that country fairs were at their last gasp, that every village was to have its millinery rooms, that the shopkeepers of the villages were to be the victims of the shopkeepers of market-towns, that the market-towns were to be crushed by the county, and that Paris was to make but one mouthful of the county towns.

The march of improvement in the provinces, cross-road and high-road commissioners, commissioners of sewers, and other public works; in short, all the gigantic undertakings of the last fifty years, and principally the realization and opening of railroads, might all have been suggested to the merest tyro in political economy by the sight of that solitary cap, and the violin strings in the Carillons' shop-windows.

Two of the daughters of the deceased milliner had reached the trying ages of twenty-nine and thirty-one without being married, when one morning early there was seen written on one of the green shop-shutters the following doggrel,—

"Here live fair sisters three,
Who—all Laon does fear—
Of suitors three hundred
Not one husband will see."

The town might have been bombarded next day, but the joke would have survived. Being about as delicate in its satire as a dairy-maid's box on the ear, it was greatly relished by the enlightened citizens of Laon and its environs. The four lines were repeated at Soissons, echoed at St. Quentin, and re-echoed at Rheims. Never, perhaps, was there a more flagrant instance of an author waking and finding himself famous; but whoever it was, he either remained anonymous because he was ashamed of his fame, or unconscious of it—or what was most probable, the verse was the effusion of some little blackguard

going to work in the morning—some unknown Milton of the suburb.

The poor sisters in their inexperience looked upon themselves as branded for life as egregious flirts, took the matter seriously to heart, particularly the sensitive eldest, and shrunk from being seen as if they had been detected criminals. The older they grew the more the wound festered, for the joke was becoming a truth—and the jest and the reality were two powers that easily succeeded in triumphing over the little remaining courage they possessed.

Sophy, the eldest, had a long illness in consequence, though she never confessed the cause, and even after the fever had left her, every morning exactly at the same hour as that in which she had discovered the unlucky verse, she was seized with spasms, wanderings of mind, a complete prostration of strength—in short, with all the symptoms classed by the Faculty under the head of nervous attacks.

The three sisters had all read the verse at the same instant, for Caroline, the second, seeing the look of despair with which Sophy was staring at the shutter, had hastened to her side, as did Bertha, the youngest, at that time a lively girl of fifteen, who never thought of connecting her eldest sister's faintness with what was scrawled on the shutter. One look exchanged between Sophy and Caroline showed that they felt alike, but no allusion was ever made by either to the other; the unac-

countable morbid sensibility of the eldest on the subject rendering it a duty to the others to avoid any recurrence to it.

Between the ages of twenty-four and twenty-six, the elder Misses Carillon were rarely to be met with in the streets of Laon—their shop gave them little to do, but they obtained orders for embroidery from the nuns of the convent at Soissons, in which they had been educated. Their small profits from this employment enabled them to live and to pass their days in peace behind their richly-flowered muslin blinds, the only ornament of their shop.

Their embroidery was like fairies' work, and they had given themselves, as a shelter from the curiosity of the passers-by, the luxury of such splendidly worked curtains, that a duchess might have coveted them for cobweb pocket-handkerchiefs.

The Misses Carillon, who seldom were to be seen out unless on business, had a peculiarity which is often a positive misfortune to women. They were very tall, particularly Sophy and Caroline, not handsome, not even pretty, though they had tolerably regular features, the nose perhaps rather too long, but well shaped, and abundance of hair, black as the raven's wing.

In their rank of life the short have many advantages over the tall. A little woman is on an average with the rest of her sex, can pass in the crowd unobserved—the smallest of shawls being a drapery for her ; while, as for

tall women, they need to be dressed to suit their "queenly carriage," according to Laon phraseology. The Misses Carillon were far above the ordinary size, and it was scarcely possible to avoid comparing them with the little doors past which they were gliding, and very likely their dignified air deprived them of more than one offer of marriage.

The milliners by degrees became resigned to a life of almost cloistral seclusion—they sometimes went out in the evening, and always dressed as simply as possible.

Bertha, the youngest, did not however quite so strictly adhere to this sort of life. She differed essentially from her sisters in complexion, size, and tastes. Little, petulant, and roguish, the bright red of her hair, that looked as if scorched by Phœbus, also placed her under the ban of provincial taste.

In proportion to the rarity of hair of this colour have been the stupid and ill-natured tirades of the common run of mankind against the brightness born of the sun. Aware of the prejudice, Sophy Carillon advised Bertha to endeavour to sober down the golden splendours of her head by using a leaden comb each morning—an innocent remedy, for never did leaden comb change light hair into dark. Bertha Carillon lived on, without even guessing the real beauty of her hair, and without ever receiving any homage on its account.

The illness of Miss Carillon procured for the sisters the benefit of some society in the person of Doctor

Triballet, who did his best, but all in vain, to cure the milliner's nervous attacks. Mr. Triballet, pompously styled Doctor, had been formerly an army assistant-surgeon, and had returned to Laon, his native place, on inheriting a good fortune.

He was fat enough to have made three doctors; his chin was not double but triple, and yet his head was only on a level with the Misses Carillon's counter. He was a corpulent, apoplectic-looking dwarf, walked with difficulty, and always with his mouth open to breathe the better. He could have played the part of Æolus to the life, in a mythological ballet, his ogre-like puffing always announcing his approach at the distance of twenty paces.

His bright-red face, divided in half by its little blue eyes, was encircled by crisp grey hair, and a pair of silvery white whiskers, looking like two snow-balls on a plate of strawberries.

Notwithstanding his stormy breathing and the ever-impending apoplectic fit, Mr. Triballet was a joyous-looking fellow, as, indeed, are all those alarmingly healthy men, from under whose skin the blood would burst, did it not find outlets in the little purple canals which meander all over their faces.

The Doctor was miles off from any understanding of Sophy Carillon's malady; he had been accustomed, when in the regiment, to doctor the men with horse medicines. On his return to civil life, many neuralgic

cases came under his observation; and he had shewn both good-will and a tender conscience by buying a book which specially treated of those diseases. But he was not much the wiser for his purchase, the nerves furnishing more *variorum* than even mezzotint proofs of Rembrandt.

Mr. Triballet prescribed baths, ether, orange-flower water, the mineral waters of the spring of Bruyères, a village in the neighbourhood, but was beaten on every tack. His last resource was to be present every morning during the crisis, and to try what very sincere words of pity would do in the way of remedy, particularly as he felt satisfied there was no aggravation in the attacks.

"Come, come, Miss, now for a little courage," was his daily exclamation on the appearance of the first symptoms. But the disease always had the upper hand of Mr. Triballet, and of his kindly words, though every morning regularly he slapped the palms of the milliner's hands for a quarter of an hour; and could a hurricane have done any good in such cases, his twenty-horse-power breathing must have cured her long ago.

"Ha! ha! we are getting better again," was his daily joyful exclamation, when he saw her recovering—"Good, very good, we are well again; after all, it is nothing . . . poor thing, poor thing; we are not in any pain, are we?" (A pause.) Then in a softened voice, "Can I do anything for you?"

During the lapse of eight years, the Doctor had never

once missed what he called his attendance, had never charged a halfpenny, never changed one word of his friendly phrases, and never discovered any new treatment. His advice had gradually shrunk into his saying that probably mountain air and exercise would strengthen her. Of course, he, in common with the other inhabitants of Laon, had heard the famous doggrel, but he never suspected that it had reached the sisters' ears. If he had even known to the contrary, all his science, poor man, would have been equally useless.

The Doctor's good-will was so untiring, and his little blue eyes always expressed so much sympathy, that Miss Carillon never was heard or seen to resent his want of medical success. Mr. Triballet visited the sisters in a double capacity, as physician in the morning, and friend in the afternoon.

Mr. Triballet, indeed, scarcely liked to think of himself in his medical capacity. Forced by his father to study military surgery, he had obeyed, served his time in the army as he would have done had he been an articled clerk in a civilian's office. As soon as he was entitled to retire, he did so, and returned to Laon with a stout determination to lead, for the future, a peaceable life.

His day was as regularly ruled out as if it had been a ledger; illness alone could make any difference in the filling up of the spaces. Mr. Triballet did not trouble his head much about virtue and vice; he paid an annual subscription to the charitable fund for the poor of the

town, and believed he had thus acquired a right to abuse every beggar who knocked at his door.

One morning, most unaccountably, Mr. Triballet did not come at his usual time, but arrived an hour after Miss Carillon's nervous attack was over.

"Well," said he, as he met Bertha sweeping down the door-steps, "how has it gone off this morning? But don't tell me, I must judge for myself. Oh! why was I not here?—what a misfortune!"

The milliner's now habitual fit, however, did not seem to have been longer or more severe in consequence of the Doctor's absence, though he believed his presence so indispensable.

"My dear young lady, forgive me," he began, rolling a pair of round blue eyes full of entreaty.

"Indeed, Mr. Triballet, you are already quite forgiven."

"If you only knew the cause which prevented me"—

"Every one has business, and you more than any one, Doctor."

"No, no! Miss Sophy, I am guilty—let me ask pardon."

"What an odd man you are, Doctor! but since you care so much about it, I am ready to listen to you."

"Humph!"—(the Doctor's enormous sigh can only be described by this onomatopy.) "You don't know how you have tormented me all night."

"I?" exclaimed Miss Carillon.

"Yes you," continued the Doctor, puffing as if he would have blown away a disagreeable recollection; "you did nothing but reproach me about your illness."

"But, Doctor, believe me"—

"Yes, yes, I know it was all a dream," said Mr. Triballet; "I don't believe in dreams myself, and I know persons who do, say dreams always come contrary."

"Just so," answered Miss Carillon; "you dreamed that I blamed you about my illness, which means that I am exceedingly grateful to you for your kind care."

"Humph!" heaved forth the Doctor again; but this time it was differently intoned, and expressed great satisfaction; "that's true enough."

"Yes, very true, and doubly true, once in your dream going by contraries, and a second time in reality—for again and again I thank you for all your friendly attentions."

After a long conversation, which every morning turned on the same subject, the Doctor went home to his breakfast quite contented. Nowhere had he ever found so pleasing a woman, one so willing to make herself agreeable. The eldest of the sisters, seated at her counter working at her embroidery, was far more charming in his eyes than the most fashionable lady he had ever beheld reclining on an elegant sofa. Sophy conversed with simplicity, and an intelligence which appeared the greater from the contrast of the small shop, and all the poverty that surrounded her. She understood how to

bring her conversation down to Mr. Triballet's level, who in truth had no great fund of information, having passed the greater part of his life with officers in the Cafés of garrison towns,—which manner of living had not given him much insight into the ways of good society.

The autumn of 1831 brought a new lodger to the sisters Carillon,—no small event in their monotonous life. Out of the Rheims coach, which put up at the Griffin Hotel, stepped a thin, yellow man, with a face furrowed by wrinkles as deep as sabre-cuts. A carpet-bag, a parcel of books, was all the stranger's luggage, who looked terrified at finding himself all alone in the middle of a town where he did not know a creature. As he mechanically raised his eyes, they fell on a bill announcing that several rooms for single men were to let in a house opposite, the exterior of which, though whitewashed but lately, was in no way significant of wealth. Under the whitewash could easily be traced pieces of wood twisted in the shape of an X,—a certain proof of ancient construction.

The display of millinery corresponded with the almost poor appearance of the house. By chance Caroline Carillon was on the door-step taking a sort of unconscious interest in the arrival of the coach. She had on a grey cotton gown, with a black silk apron. The only thing about her which might have attracted attention, was the amazing quantity of her hair, which, however, far from

being displayed to advantage, was modestly twisted round a comb. She was smiling to the ropemaker's little daughter, who was looking out of a window; and her smile testified to a heart as good as her teeth.

The traveller, though evidently of a timid nature, went towards her with a polite bow, and asked if he could see the rooms that were to be let. Caroline showed him into the shop, took the carpet-bag from his hand, and begged him to sit down, while she called her sister Bertha, who was upstairs.

"Is Monsieur going to remain in Laon for any length of time? . . . He is probably not acquainted with the town? . . . He is quite a stranger?"

Such were the queries with which Miss Carillon endeavoured to begin a conversation. The traveller's replies were vague and hesitating, and, to all appearance, the presence of the two young women intimidated him.

"I have only rooms at twenty francs each the month to offer you, sir," said Sophy.

"That will do," answered the stranger.

"At all events you will have pure air, and a pretty view of the mountain of Vaux. The look-out is very lively."

"Very well. Am I far from the College, madam?"

"You are exactly in the middle of the town here; in ten minutes, or even in less, you can reach the College. This house has two entrances—one through the passage at the side of the shop, leading up to the room to be let

on the second floor—and another opening on the square of the Hotel de Ville. Bertha will show you them both, and you will find it a great convenience, because in spring and summer you can come home by the Promenades, while in winter you can return through the town."

"I take one of the rooms," said the stranger.

"But you have not seen the room yet, sir, and it may not suit you."

"I take it."

"What name, sir, shall I mark down in the register?"

"Delteil, Professor of the Seventh Class in the College."

"Ah! Monsieur is a Professor," said Caroline. "Our College is very highly spoken of—the scholars are very well dressed—all in uniform—and they have drums."

"Drums!" cried Mr. Delteil.

"And a band also."

"A band!" ejaculated the Professor.

"Yes, and a very good one. Every one in Laon runs out to hear it."

Mr. Delteil gave a sigh, mechanically repeating,—"Drums!—A band!" as if he were perfectly astounded.

"You will find this a very convenient situation, sir," said Sophy Carillon; "there is a table-d'hôte at the Boar's Head, the best hotel in Laon, and it is in the square close by this. Almost all travellers and strangers go there."

"No, no!" said Mr. Delteil, hastily.

"Then there is the Banner," continued Sophy; "but I don't know what sort of people frequent it. I would rather advise you to go to the Griffin opposite. They are good people—cook well—indeed the genteelest people in Laon often order very choice dishes there—and, above all, everything is very clean."

"I am very tired with my journey," said Mr. Delteil; "I should like to go to bed, if my room be ready."

At this moment Bertha came down stairs.

"Take this gentleman up to the yellow room," said Caroline; "it is ready, is it not?"

"Yes, sister, quite ready."

Bertha wanted to carry Mr. Delteil's packages, but he would not allow her. Scarcely was the door closed on him before he opened his carpet-bag and drew out a halfpenny roll, and a carefully folded paper containing a piece of chocolate. At the same time he pulled forth a Greek book, laid it on the table by the side of him, and began eating with great appetite, reading all the while. Though the repast did not last long, Mr. Delteil interrupted it three different times in order to consult an enormous packet of memoranda, yellow with age, written in Greek, and which his impetuous researches soon threw into inextricable disorder. The meal finished, he gave a sigh of beatitude that would have been more in keeping from an epicure stuffed with truffles, and then began arranging the different articles contained in his

half-filled carpet-bag on the chimney, the top of the bureau, and in the chest of drawers.

His property consisted of two shirts, some thread, needles, pens, paper, a little bottle of ink, and a great number of sheets of paper, written only on one side, and which he handled with the greatest care, as if they were his most precious possession.

"We have got a lodger," said Sophy Carillon in the evening to Mr. Triballet.

"Ah, indeed!" answered the Doctor, with the intonation of one who understands all the importance of the news.

"Is he a young man?" inquired Mr. Triballet, getting hold of the scissors lying on the counter.

"Why, not exactly, Doctor. He is a new Professor at the College."

"I congratulate you then, Miss Sophy, for I should think that in all probability you have secured a good lodger."

"Yes, he will not make much noise," replied she. "He does not look very talkative; he gives me the idea of being a very learned man. Will you let me have the scissors for a moment?"

Dr. Triballet had a trick of taking hold of every pair of scissors he saw. He wore his grey hair very long—long enough to tuck behind his ears, and had never been known to enter a hairdresser's shop, though he could not talk for five minutes, particularly if seated,

without shearing off the ends of some of his grey locks. This operation, repeated every quarter of an hour, rendered any recourse to other hands unnecessary.

"Well, how does Mr. Delteil like his room?" said Sophy to Bertha.

"I opened the door, he went in, and made me a bow without saying a word."

"Poor man! he seemed very tired, and not in a mood to talk," remarked Caroline Carillon.

"I have a plan, about which I want your advice, Mr. Triballet," said the eldest of the sisters.

"I shall be too happy," said the Doctor, once more seizing on the scissors, which Sophy had laid down on the counter, and, with his left hand, snipping off some of his hair.

"I have often spoken to you of my nephew, who lives at Vervins—he will soon be ten years old; don't you think it is time to send him to the College?"

"Mr. Triballet, my scissors, if you please," cried out Bertha Carillon.

"Here they are, madam. Your nephew is an orphan, I think you told me."

"Alas! the dear child has long been alone in the world, and I have often repented not bringing him up myself; he is such a sweet child that his nurse—an excellent clever woman she is—cannot bear the idea of parting with him. My intention is to give him a good education. If you could only see how handsome and good he

is! He understands almost everything without being taught. He learned to read alone, and he writes to me once every week, though he has never been to school."

Mr. Triballet slyly re-possessed himself of the pair of scissors, which Bertha had placed out of his reach on purpose, and cut off a lock of hair close to one of his ears.

"Ah!" said he, "the College—certainly, Latin and Greek are taught at the College."

"What is your opinion?" Mr. Triballet.

"When I was young," answered he, "boys did not learn all those things, and were none the worse, I can tell you."

"Then you are against education, Mr. Triballet?"

"Not at all, Miss Sophy. I am quite of your opinion, only I think fatigue bad for children."

"You mean that so much study may be injurious to them; in that case I will not send my nephew to the College."

"I did not say that precisely."

"Have you ever heard that any of the College boys were ill in consequence of too hard study?"

"No, I don't think so. But I can give no advice on the matter, for I know nothing about Latin."

"This Professor coming to lodge here put the idea into my head," said Sophy; "he seems so gentle—I will speak to him to-morrow on the subject."

"That is your best plan," said Mr. Triballet, "it is

his business. As for me, I understand nothing about it; when they have half-killed your nephew with Latin, it will then be my turn."

"Killed!" ejaculated Sophy, "but I don't want that; I had rather he played about the fields and learned nothing, than run any risk."

"Mr. Triballet," cried Bertha, "you are too bad; give me back my scissors."

The Doctor looked about for the scissors without finding them.

"I wager anything they are in your hair," said Bertha.

Another trick of Mr. Triballet's was, when he found a small pair of scissors to put them behind his ears, exactly as clerks do their pens. The thickness of his hair retained the scissors very well, and he often returned home unconscious of this singular appendage. When his servant in doing out his room happened to find a strange pair of scissors on the toilet-table, it was the signal for an explosion of queries.

"Where did you get these scissors, sir? Did you bring them home yesterday or the day before? Do try and recollect;" but Mr. Triballet never could recollect. Then ensued a cross-examination as to all the visits he had paid the day before, and then the poor woman had to go from door to door, inquiring who had lost a pair of scissors the evening before.

"I'll cure you of this bad habit before I have done with you," said Bertha.

"How can you, Bertha?" said Sophy, in a reproachful tone.

"Young ladies, shall we take a walk?" asked the Doctor.

"With pleasure, Mr. Triballet," answered Sophy, who for the last five years had never missed going every day to the Promenade St. Just for a half-hour's walk with the Doctor and her sister Bertha, Caroline staying at home to attend to the shop.

Exactly opposite to the milliner's house, and by the side of the Griffin Hotel, there is an old gateway, by passing through which, and along the ramparts, the Promenade St. Just may be reached without going into the town. Sophy preferred that walk, because it was less frequented than the others—the proximity to the Cemetery, which fronts the Promenade, frightening away the bourgeois of Laon. A notary's clerk or an employé may occasionally be met there in the evening walking home with some sempstress after her day's work is over, but even that is rare.

Without being what is termed melancholy, still Sophy Carillon liked the quiet of this deserted promenade, and as Mr. Triballet did not practise medicine, and had no patients, he could pass the Cemetery without remorse. He and Sophy walked arm in arm, while Bertha ran on before, amusing herself like a child, and occasionally even by making uncalled-for remarks on any stray lovers they might meet, and who falsely believed themselves secure from recognition by the darkness.

Bertha indeed kept her sisters informed of all the love-tales in Laon, and to talk them over was a happy diversion in the monotony of these three women's lives, who visited nowhere, and had no acquaintance but Mr. Triballet. Like all their sex, they took an immense interest in affairs of the heart; and Bertha, who had the sharpest eyes in the world, never let a young pair pass with impunity—they were always lovers in her opinion. After Mr. Triballet had taken his leave, generally came a gossip on Bertha's discoveries, and as what they said never went beyond their own walls, no harm was done. Mr. Triballet never failed to bring them news of marriages, so, on the whole, they had a pretty accurate statistics of the love and matrimony of Laon.

On this particular evening Bertha had the good luck to meet at least three pairs of lovers, which supplied ample food for the evening's talk; and as Mr. Triballet went away immediately after the walk to pay some visits to his other acquaintances in the town, the sisters were left at liberty to enter into this new chapter in the romance of life.

When it had been thoroughly discussed, Sophy informed her sisters that she was going, according to her weekly custom, to Vervins next day, but this time with the intention of bringing their nephew back with her. On this very day, while Sophy was absent, Bertha, in passing through the corridor, caught sight of Mr. Delteil in the act of dressing.

Being in his shirt sleeves, the absence of his black coat allowed his extreme leanness to be seen. He had his left arm buried in a boot, to which he was trying to give a polish by means of a brush, the state of which bore witness to a long hereditary service. His grey hair in a marvellous tangle, was hanging over his eyes. Though his complexion was dark, and his skin looked like old leather, Bertha perceived that the Professor reddened at being discovered engaged in such an ignoble occupation. He retreated two steps, hoping that the young girl had not seen him.

"You should not take this trouble, sir," said Bertha; "if you leave your boots outside the door at night, you will always find them cleaned very early the next morning."

"Thank you, madam, but I don't dislike the employment."

He closed the door to finish his toilet; with the same brush which he had used for his boots, he made a pretence of brushing his coat, but no dust would condescend to lodge on such a shining material, which in its youth had been cloth, but in its old age had lost all resemblance to any known material. It really shone more brightly than the boots; when close to it, it was easy to perceive the wondrous fabric of the loom, and the elbows were positively grown grey with years.

Mr. Delteil took his ink off the chimney-piece, placed his thumb in the place of the cork, jerked the little bottle,

and then carefully passed a delicate wash of ink over the elbows. Drawing on his great boots, which looked as if made by the boot-maker to a cavalry regiment, he went to a table from which hung a piece of white muslin, and felt it. The muslin was still damp, so on second thoughts Mr. Delteil spread upon the bed the neckcloth he had on when he arrived, and folded it the contrary way, striving to hide the yellow lines marked on it by the dust of a long journey.

He examined his face for a long time in a small glass, also forming part of his property, and perceived that his beard had sprouted beyond all allowance. This discovery necessitated a search for a newspaper parcel, out of which he took a razor, shaving-brush, a broken pot of pomatum, and a small bit of soap. The razor was a miracle of what a careful hand can do in the way of preserving such an instrument. It had as many rivets as if it had been a precious and rare piece of china belonging to some enthusiastic connoisseur bent upon its lasting through eternity; and these rivets, some of wire, some of tin, were executed in such a way as to show that they could only have been the work of the owner. The blade had been worn by the grindstone to the width of a penny ribbon, and many a hone must have been sacrificed to it.

When Mr. Delteil had prepared all that was necessary for the important operation of shaving, he dipped the shaving-brush, which, with its few remaining bristles,

looked more like a cat's whiskers than a brush, into some very economical scrapings of soap. The razor was luckily of fine steel, otherwise it would have been no easy matter to dislodge the enemy from the wrinkles, pits, and ravines of that face, the skin of which had a considerable similarity with a binding in shagreen.

At last, to the great satisfaction of the Professor, who had the utmost contempt for these minutiæ of life, his toilet was completed. He gazed at himself from head to foot with the secret pleasure of a leader of fashion, and went out holding his head rather higher than usual.

The back of the Carillons' house looked out upon the Hotel de Ville, near a covered passage through which there is a short cut to the ramparts. Mr. Delteil, hearing the sound of many voices in this passage, went in to ask his way to the College.

A dozen little boys were playing at marbles there—some in blouses, and some in uniform. At the first sight of a strange face they were all silent, but as soon as Mr. Delteil came close to them in his black coat and white cravat, the oddity of his appearance gave birth to a most formidable shout.

The Professor was at first quite stunned, and, doubtful whether the cry was raised in his honour, or what interpretation he ought to give it, with a gesture peculiar to himself he felt for his great steel-bound spectacles on his nose, and approached the boys; but a second shout, raised by the whole group, nailed him to the spot, quite

daunted and unable to decide whether to retreat or to advance.

It was, however, necessary to come to some decision. Almost certain that some of these boys were Collegians, he walked straight up to them; but they, thinking he was coming to punish them, took flight like a flock of pigeons, pointing their fingers at the astounded Professor, and making the square resound with their jeers.

Mr. Delteil hung his head, quite at a loss to understand the effect he had produced, and continued his walk to the College, meditating on the singularity of the children of the town of Laon. Although the road was tolerably easy to find, the Professor managed to lose his way three several times, and at last had the misfortune to apply to Mr. Tanton, who was seated before his school-door, to direct him to the College.

The writing-master, who guessed that the stranger was a new Professor for the College, was extremely rude, and confirmed Mr. Delteil in the idea that he had come to a very uncivilized place; nor did his interview with the head-master tend to change this opinion. Mr. Tassin, intoxicated by success, treated the Professor exactly as most generals do their subalterns. Besides, the dress and deportment of Mr. Delteil wounded Mr. Tassin's vanity, who liked showy-looking masters; and he saw at once, that on a public day, or at a meeting, or in a group of masters, Mr. Delteil was not one to make a

figure. His exterior gave rather the idea of wretchedness than of poverty.

"Did you take private pupils at Angoulême?" inquired Mr. Tassin of Mr. Delteil.

"No, sir."

"I will endeavour to find you some here."

"I am much obliged to you, sir, but I have no time to spare."

"Pray, may I ask what occupies you so much?" asked Mr. Tassin, in an offended tone.

"For the last fourteen years, sir, I have been compiling a Greek Dictionary."

"Ah, indeed!" said Mr. Tassin, bowing in a manner which indicated that the interview was at an end.

By giving this information, Mr. Delteil had made himself a formidable enemy in his superior. The question of private pupils is one of the most important in the life of professors, who can by such means alone increase the small salaries they receive as masters of a class. A professor finds it difficult to live on eight hundred francs, or about thirty-two pounds a year; but if he can obtain five or six hundred supplementary francs, by giving private lessons, usually paid at the rate of twenty-five or thirty francs a month, he finds himself well off in a little country town.

Mr. Tassin had organized this system on a large scale, by making all the parents of his scholars believe that on following this plan principally depended a good

University education. It was neither interest for his pupils, nor for the masters, who thus found some compensation for their small emoluments, which induced him to give this advice; but he had made it a condition, that if he procured private pupils for the College masters, he was to receive a fourth of what they gained in this way, and consequently, he looked on Mr. Delteil's declining his offer as a personal injury, if not as a sort of robbery.

The poor Professor went away quite saddened. He did not even suspect this jockeying in matters of education, but he began to regret having left Angoulême, where he had lived in the obscurity that suited him, and without being annoyed by any one.

The following day he was surprised to hear Bertha's clear young voice in the passage, asking leave to enter his room. He jumped up from his writing, hid away in a corner all traces of his toilet and of his breakfast, and then opened the door.

"My sister Sophy wishes to speak to you, Mr. Delteil."

"Very well, Miss, I will come down directly."

"Don't take that trouble, sir; my sister will come up stairs, if you can receive her."

Mr. Delteil disliked any one intruding on his privacy; to such a degree, indeed, that, had he dared, he would have refused even to have his bed made, he was so afraid any one should know anything of his way of living. Poverty sets a mark on everything—a stray

crumb is sufficient to give an idea of a meal. He dreaded above everything that any one should think about him at all—that his misery should be canvassed —that he should be pitied.

He had been struck, in getting out of the coach, by Caroline's agreeable face, and the countenances of the other sisters did not alter the good opinion he had formed of the house; but notwithstanding all this, he followed Bertha down stairs somewhat vexed, not being yet sufficiently acquainted with the milliners to be able to trust appearances.

"I beg your pardon, sir," said Sophy, showing Mr. Delteil into the back-shop, which served the sisters for dining and drawing room; "I wished to introduce my nephew to you."

"Oh, what a pretty boy!" cried the old Professor enthusiastically.

As he made this exclamation, recollections of his own childhood, of his little joys and short-lived sorrows, of his days of happy ignorance, of his sports in the sunshine on the bright green grass, all flashed back on Mr. Delteil. This man, with the scanty grey hair, had once had just such fair long curls floating in golden luxuriance on his shoulders; the skin, now changed by study, sorrow, and vigil, into what looked like old leather seamed with wrinkles, was once of the colour of lilies and roses; the hollow cheeks were just as round; the dimmed eyes, now unable to bear the light save through the steel-

bound spectacles, were once just as sparkling; the limbs, now so painfully alive to every change in the atmosphere, were once just as flexile; the poor shrunk body, now clothed in the black and mournful livery of science, had once worn just such pretty dresses.

"And he looks so good!" exclaimed the Professor again.

"Doesn't he?" said Sophy, embracing the boy, and quite proud of the compliments paid to him.

"And what is his name?"

"Charles Marie."

"Go and kiss Mr. Delteil," said Sophy. The boy made a bound into the arms of the Professor, who showed almost a father's joy.

"Would you like to be a learned man?" asked Mr. Delteil.

"Yes, sir."

"How old is he?"

"I am ten years old," answered Charles Marie.

"Ah, well!—we shall make something of him. What has he learned?" asked the Professor.

"Only to read and write," answered Sophy; "but he spells naturally without having been taught. He is very fond of reading."

"Ha, ha! he loves to read," said Delteil; "he is a charming boy indeed."

"The curé of Vervins was very well satisfied with him. During the last two years he has read through

almost the half of the curé's books. I would have left him at Vervins another year to begin Latin, but I could not do without him any longer—I love my little Charles Marie so dearly. I have a favour to ask of you, sir. The coming home of my nephew makes this a day of rejoicing, and I should be glad if you would do us the honour to partake of our dinner."

"Oh, madam," said Mr. Delteil, "it is I that am honoured by your invitation. . . . I am not in the habit . . ."

"It will be a great pleasure to us, sir; we are alone, it is not a party, I assure you."

"Indeed, madam, it is that . . .

"If, sir, you would only say yes."

When Mr. Delteil felt himself in a manner obliged to accept, "Well, madam," said he, "I cannot refuse without seeming rude, but I am afraid my presence will not add to your gaiety—a man with his head full of Greek is no ornament at a dinner party . . . but if you really wish it, I will come."

"Thank you," said Sophy.

"Very well, then, I say yes," answered Mr. Delteil.

"Bertha," said Sophy, "go and ask Mrs. Dodin to let her son come and dine here; tell her that Charles Marie is arrived, and that the two boys will amuse one another."

Bertha took her nephew with her; the beauty of the child made him remarked by every one as they passed

on their way to Mrs. Dodin, who, in her business of mantua-maker, had sometimes dealings with the milliners. When Bertha went in with Charles Marie, little Dodin was seated on a high stool close to a stove, watching with the greatest interest the smoke that issued from a copper saucepan. His lips were compressed, and his quivering nostrils were dilated, as if better to catch the smell of fried bacon that filled the room.

On hearing that he was invited out to dinner, Dodin could scarcely contain his joy, and would have set off at once, could he have prevailed on himself to leave the slices of meat which were frying away briskly in butter. "He is a regular gourmand," remarked Mrs. Dodin, with a sweet smile, which showed all her maternal weakness for her son.

However, when the slices were eaten, Dodin was at liberty to think of his new friend, and he took him to play on the promenade nearest to Miss Carillon's house.

The dinner went off well—though Mr. Delteil ate but little, and was embarrassed as much as if he had been between two princesses instead of two milliners. If the three sisters had not always been on the watch to hand him bread and give him wine, he would have sat there without ever uttering a word. Dodin asked questions about every dish, and gave advice and information that would have done honour to a *cordonbleu.*

"Is there to be a *charlotte?*" asked Dodin all at once.

"No, indeed," replied Sophy, laughing.

"Oh! how well mamma makes them!" returned Dodin, licking his lips.

"Unfortunately, I don't know how to make a charlotte," said Sophy.

Dodin seemed to meditate for a moment, then with a very serious face he began thus:—"Peel and take out the heart of twenty russet apples, cut them into pieces, lay them in a saucepan in which there is some melted butter, and add sugar and cinnamon; then put some fire above and below the pan. If you don't shake them, they won't stick; when the apples are quite soft, pass them through a sieve, give them a little more firing, always taking care that they don't stick to the pan."

"Why, you are repeating one of the receipts out of the *Cuisinière bourgeoise*," said Bertha.

"Wait a minute," continued Dodin, "cut some crusts of bread in the form of a heart, with which garnish the bottom of a shape, but don't leave any spaces between; the point of the hearts must be towards the centre, then put the crusts all round the side of the shape."

"Is he one of the College boys?" inquired Mr. Delteil, in a low whisper of Sophy.

"Yes, sir, he is going to be moved into the seventh class."

Mr. Delteil gave a deep sigh, which was almost a groan, as Dodin went on.—"All these crusts must be first soaked in melted butter, then put the apples inside,

but by layers, and between each layer of apples put a layer of apricot jam." Here Dodin stopped.

"Have you finished?" asked Sophy. "Does this amuse you?" added she, turning to Charles Marie, who was laughing at hearing this odd lesson recited.

"A layer of apricot jam," repeated Dodin, who did not trouble himself as to what they said or thought.

"Ah!" he exclaimed, with a shout of joy, "now I remember what comes next; cover the whole with very thin slices of bread; put some fire below and above, and twenty minutes will be sufficient to give a colour; turn out on a dish, and serve hot."

Having concluded, he looked round as if for applause. Mr. Delteil raised his hands and eyes to the ceiling. Dodin mistook the impression he had made; he imagined he had not shewn sufficient memory. "To make a *charlotte russe* of apples," he began again, "sponge-cakes are placed in the same way as bread crusts in the other charlotte, but the apples are to be boiled in butter"—

"That's enough, my dear," said Caroline Carillon, who did not look so much amused as her sisters.

"Mamma is never tired of listening to me all day," said Dodin; "perhaps you don't care because I told you of a sweet dish, but I know all the different ways of cooking eggs."

"Thank you, my little friend, but we already know how to cook eggs," answered Caroline.

"When the classes begin again," said Dodin, "I shall learn all the soups by heart."

Mr. Delteil fidgeted on his chair.

"And then, afterwards, all the receipts for beef," continued Dodin. "Mamma says I must go through the cookery-book regularly, and that it is good practice for my memory."

"I should not advise you," said Mr. Delteil to Sophy, "to let Charles Marie be too much with that little—(he hesitated a moment)—too much with that little scullion."

"He is not a bad boy," returned Sophy, "but his mother spoils him."

"Let's see," said Bertha, who was extremely diverted with Dodin, "if you know how to make fritters."

"To be sure I do," said Dodin; "I know how to make them in three different ways. Shall I tell you how to make English fritters?"

"No, thank you."

"Or Polish fritters?" cried Dodin, eagerly.

"Charles Marie, do you like fritters?" asked Bertha.

"Yes, aunt."

"Then we will make some by and bye," said Bertha.

At this moment there was a ring at the shop-door.

"Here's the Doctor," cried Sophy. "Ah, my dear Doctor! you have just come in time; we are going to make some fritters."

"They are very heavy for digestion," answered the

"But, sir," said Mr. Delteil, "even botany has Latinized many herbs and plants."

"Pugh! what is botany? I go into a wood—I know the plants I need by sight—I pick them, bring them home, boil them—I make a capital decoction, which I give to my patients when they want it. Would I make the decoction any better if I wrote *barbaro* on the bottle?"

"I thought," said Mr. Delteil, timidly, "that it was not possible to study botany without knowing a little Latin."

"Pooh, pooh! that's just the way with the people of the present day—artisans, mechanics, shopkeepers, and small gentry, all send their sons to the College," answered Mr. Triballet, getting heated by the discussion. "I ask you to tell me what good it does them? Do I need a lawyer, or notary, or carpenter, to speak Latin to me? That's not all—they must meddle with Greek also. It is pedants who" . . .

"Come, come, Mr. Triballet," said Sophy, taking the Doctor by the arm, and leading him away to free Mr. Delteil, "don't get angry—the blood will go to your head."

"I think I have given your Professor a bit of my mind," exclaimed Mr. Triballet, exultingly.

"I hope," said Sophy, "you have not been rude to him."

"I don't like your little man in black—Isn't he thin and yellow? It's Latin that has made him so."

" Now, Mr. Triballet, don't be unjust, you who are in general so good."

" That's true; but do you know you will make your nephew just like him ?"

" You don't say so," cried Sophy.

" I warn you; you had better put your nephew to a good trade."

" But Charles Marie likes to learn; he passes all his time in reading."

" Oh, that alters the case. If he likes it, why, let him do it."

Mr. Delteil, frightened by Dr. Triballet's attack, took refuge in a corner of the room, where Charles Marie went to him, jumped on his knee, and began caressing the old Professor as if he wished to make amends for the annoyance that had been given him. During this time Caroline Carillon cleared the table, while Bertha, followed by Dodin, went to fetch what was necessary to make the fritters.

"I beg of you," said Sophy to Mr. Triballet, " be civil to Mr. Delteil, he is an excellent person."

" Nonsense, you think everybody as good as you are yourself. You don't know anything about him, he only arrived yesterday, and yet you are answering for his goodness."

" But it is easy to see by his face how good he is."

" A perfect stranger !" cried Mr. Triballet.

"Well, I like him as he is."

"Then I shall take my leave," said the Doctor.

"You don't mean that you are going away?"

"Where's my hat? where's my stick?" cried Mr. Triballet, hunting in every corner of the dining-room.

"Indeed, Mr. Triballet, this is very unkind."

"What's the matter?" asked Caroline, who saw her sister looking quite unhappy.

By this time Mr. Triballet had found his stick; he made a bow all round, and left the room.

"How odd you look!" said Caroline, running after the Doctor, and catching him in the shop.

"Very true," he grumbled.

"But what is the matter? Are you ill?"

"No," replied the Doctor, "but your sister—ouf!" and he went out, leaving Caroline very uneasy, and quite at a loss to understand these quarrels.

"I have got the things for the fritters," said Bertha, coming in, still closely followed by Dodin, whom she had dressed up like a cook. "What is become of Mr. Triballet?" she inquired of Sophy, who was sitting down with a disconsolate face.

"He is gone," said Caroline.

"Already?" cried Bertha, "and without waiting for the fritters!"

And she began mixing the flour and eggs.

"A spoonful of brandy, a good pinch of salt, a spoonful of oil, and two of orange-flower water, equal parts of

milk and water to thin it to the consistence of porridge," recited Dodin, with the greatest gravity.

"Very well," said Bertha, "I obey all your orders, Mr. Cook."

"This paste ought to be prepared," continued Dodin, "three or four hours beforehand."

"If we wait so long," said Bertha, "we should not eat any fritters to-day."

"Make a clear fire with small wood," continued Dodin.

"As you are so clever," said Bertha, laughing, "you are sentenced to hold the handle of the frying-pan."

The evening passed merrily, Dodin's blunders contributing not a little to the general amusement, for accustomed to cook in a school-desk, he lost his presence of mind when he had to manage a large frying-pan. He was pronounced to be a capital cook in theory, but an arrant bungler in practice.

At eleven o'clock, Mr. Delteil, astonished at having so long forgotten his Greek Dictionary, hurried up to his room. He thought the sisters very agreeable, but he felt that he must be on his guard against the pleasures of the table, always to be avoided by the devotees of science.

CHAPTER V.

EXTRAORDINARY HISTORY OF A CROCODILE—RINEAU'S FATHER BECOMES A JOURNALIST ON THE OCCASION.

THE classes re-opened next day. Mr. Tassin made a speech first to the boarders, then to the day-scholars, then to the professors, and lastly to the band. He had grown doubly pompous during the vacation, and the success of the preceding six months had so intoxicated him, that he actually proceeded to the creation of a drum-major.

Larmuzeaux fell in love with this new dignity, and after having bred silk-worms and pigeons, his ambition took a higher flight, and he now aspired to walk at the head of his fellow-collegians in a gold-laced coat. His thin sickly face was almost lost within the hairy depths of the grenadier's cap; perhaps some latent feeling of personal vanity had stimulated him to apply for this high appointment, it might have been in the hope of hiding his large flat ears, which came out in such relief on each side of his cocked hat.

But Larmuzeaux turned out a complete failure as drum-major. Instead of walking with head proudly erect, he held it down in a melancholy fashion; instead of twirling gaily aloft his tasselled stick, he poked it along the ground as if seeking some lost treasure in the gutter.

His first appearance in his new office was indeed singularly unsuccessful. Little Bineau taking advantage of the momentary absence of Mr. Tassin, drew a large mouse in white chalk on the back of the finely embroidered coat. Thus adorned, the unconscious Larmuzeaux traversed the whole town with a troop of laughing ragamuffins at his heels, rattling an accompaniment with pieces of broken plates, as dexterously as Spanish dancers with castanets could have done.

Bineau had been promoted to the rank of corporal of the band, but his indomitable activity very soon tarnished the splendours of his silver stripes. Music was the only thing for which he had ever been known to shew any respect; it was with great difficulty he had been brought to tolerate either Lagache's commercial bias, Dodin's culinary genius, his friend Canivet's turn for mechanics, or Cucquigny's caricatures.

All these six boys were under Mr. Delteil, they were the leaders of the seventh class, the rest being mere ruddy-cheeked bullet-headed peasants, who, whether idle or industrious, never left the path their forefathers had trodden before them. Once out of the College, they

laid their Latin aside, to follow at the tail of the plough.

Mr. Delteil ranged his pupils in a row, passed them in review, and took down each of their names. The first week was devoted both by professor and scholar to a recognizance of each other,—perhaps the latter were studying the master far more than the master his pupils.

Every master, on the re-opening of schools of whatever kind, strives to arm himself for the struggle before him of nearly a year's duration ; he applies his mind to the examination of individuals as well as of his class collectively ; he endeavours to discover whether the good principle or the bad is in the ascendant ; fixes his attention on the minority, which often becomes a dangerous majority. Insubordination smoulders like fire, spreads like fever.

Certain professors adopt a system of almost brutal severity at first, gradually softening down as they feel themselves masters of the ground ; but ten years' experience as a teacher had failed to form Mr. Delteil for his office, and he arrived at Laon, just what he was when he first entered the university. He came to know his pupils by sight, because of his daily intercourse with them, but he never had the slightest guess of their characters ; he had neither the tact nor method required in his walk of life. His Greek Dictionary so completely filled every cell of his brains, that there was no room for any new ideas.

A child of ten years old could always get the upper hand of Mr. Delteil, and if he had passed some quiet years, it was that he had hitherto met with gentle, well-disposed boys. The first thing that struck his present pupils, was his being so shortsighted. Cucquigny, the artist and wag of the class, cut out a pair of spectacles in white paper, put them on his nose, and went up so adorned to say his lesson. They then hit upon a very simple way of finding out what was the extent of the Professor's infirmity.

At the end of a week, Mr. Delteil very nearly knew all his pupils, but as, according to the common habit of shortsighted people, he always took off his spectacles to write, he recognised them more by their dress than by their faces. Now the boys were determined to prove how far their Professor could see without his glasses; so one morning, little Bineau persuaded Larmuzeaux to slip slyly out of the class-room with him.

"Make haste now and give me your coat," said Bineau, "and do you put on my jacket."

But Larmuzeaux, who enjoyed the privilege of a tail-coat, did not relish the idea of exchanging it for his companion's little jacket; besides, the melancholy drum-major never could understand a joke.

"Are you afraid that I am going to swallow your coat?" cried Bineau. "You ninny! don't you see that I want to play old Delteil a trick."

"That's all very well for you," answered Larmuzeaux,

"Bineau has got my coat," said Larmuzeaux, ashamed of the laughter he excited.

"No, sir," cried Bineau, "it was he who took my jacket."

"I wonder, young gentlemen," said Mr. Delteil, "that you are not ashamed of such disorderly conduct."

"Give me back my jacket," cried Bineau to his involuntary accomplice.

It had been with the greatest difficulty that Larmuzeaux had squeezed himself into the jacket, but to get out of it again seemed beyond his power.

"Sir!" exclaimed Bineau, "Larmuzeaux won't give me back my jacket."

"Master Larmuzeaux," said the Professor, gravely, "give back Master Bineau his jacket directly."

"He'll tear it all to pieces," continued Bineau, who saw that Larmuzeaux's desperate efforts threatened in a serious manner the safety of the sleeves of his jacket. "I only put on his coat because I had nothing else," he went on addressing Mr. Delteil; "and you see, sir, that I return it to him without any damage."

"Master Larmuzeaux," said the Professor again, "return the jacket at once, and without tearing it."

At last the unlucky drum-major was able to extricate himself.

"Master Larmuzeaux," added Mr. Delteil, "to punish you for having taken Master Bineau's jacket, you shall copy out five hundred verses."

"And what are you going to give him?" asked Larmuzeaux, who, after having been the victim of Bineau's treachery, could not bear to be the only one punished.

"You ought not to answer me, sir. Doing so might make me add to your punishment."

Scarcely a day passed in which the boys did not play Mr. Delteil some trick.

Cucquigny, who had a real talent for caricature, made a hundred sketches of the Professor before he succeeded in a profile extremely like, and easy to copy. After this the College walls were soon covered with Delteils. Mr. Tassin one day stopped to examine one of these naïve portraits, the great charcoal lines of which were boldly enough drawn on the whitewashed walls of the court. He laughed as he pointed it out to another Professor. The rebels soon knew that the head-master had laughed, and "Delteil heads" quickly spread through the town, and even into the country, Cucquigny having undertaken to teach any one who wished it how to draw the Professor's profile in a single lesson. They went the length of making coloured likenesses, and, for a whole week, the master of the seventh class received picture on picture of himself by post, until he begged the sisters to refuse all letters addressed to him. One morning after that, on entering his class, he saw the floor covered with papers. He picked up some, and found they were coloured Delteils. His large feet, his spectacles, and his Russia-leather skin, were all vividly portrayed.

"I do not know, young gentlemen, which among you take the trouble to disseminate these ridiculous pictures," said the Professor; "but rest assured that I will complain to the Principal."

In fact, after the class was over, Mr. Delteil went to Mr. Tassin, and shewed him at least twenty of these caricatures.

"Who did these?" asked the Principal.

"I do not know, sir," replied the Professor.

"Then, Mr. Professor, I cannot interfere; I have no private police at my service. My duty is to repress any rebellious or disorderly conduct; but I cannot undertake to watch or find out all that passes in each separate class: that devolves on the different professors. I do not know any of the boys of the seventh, but you ought to do so, as they are peculiarly under your care."

"I certainly know them," said Mr. Delteil, "but" . . .

"It is to be presumed," observed Mr. Tassin, "that if your pupils venture on these tricks, you have in some way or other been the cause."

"Oh, sir!" ejaculated Mr. Delteil.

"There is no doubt," continued Mr. Tassin, "that boys are just what their teachers make them."

A mathematical master, named Goudrillas, came to the Laon College at the same time as Mr. Delteil. This Goudrillas was a native of the south of France, a boaster, dirty in his habits, and never without a piece of barley-sugar in his mouth during class time; reasons enough

one would have imagined to have rendered him an object of ridicule to his pupils. But his abrupt way of moving his shaggy beard, and elf-locks of black hair floating over his shoulders, clothed him with something of the terrors of a tempest.

When after having turned up his sleeves, he went to the great framed sheet of black paper, and covering it with white chalk ciphers, began demonstrating a problem, you might have heard a pin drop. Having found on his arrival all the boys lamentably ignorant of arithmetic, he had declared that the first who presented himself without having learnt his lesson, he would have expelled the College.

Luckily Canivet had a great turn for mathematics, and though not a whit more industrious than the others, he was always at the head of the class. To save his friends from constant punishment, he wrote out problems, and gave them to Dodin, Bineau, and Lagache. This was generally done between twelve o'clock and half-past one, up in one of the trees of "The Plain," a walk close to the College.

The four friends had a rendezvous at a certain tree, and after their second breakfast or lunch, they met there, climbed up with their pens, ink, and paper, to one of the largest branches, and there wrote to Canivet's dictation. Most of the plots against Mr. Delteil were hatched in the same place, while he, poor man, was walking under the very limes which sheltered his enemies.

Though his Saturday bulletins might have tamed young tigers, his class held him in the greatest contempt. Dodin, who, except on the subject of cookery, was an acknowledged dunce, usually carried home the following:—

Themes,	Tolerable.
Version,	Tolerable.
Memory,	Tolerable.
Conduct,	Tolerable.
French language,	Tolerable.

Bineau, the demon of the College, and who would have wearied out the patience of a saint, found all his faults put down as thoughtlessness. One thing greatly embarrassed Mr. Delteil, and that was to assign places in his class to his pupils, for compositions which were never composed.

It was rare indeed that Lagache, Larmuzeaux, Cucquigny, Bineau, or Dodin, took the trouble to learn any of their lessons by heart. They all five complained of having no memory, and the Professor so thoroughly believed them, that he never failed to add to the column headed "Remarks," in the Saturday's bulletin, "absolute want of memory." Mr. Delteil might have added, with more truth, "absolute want of books." Dodin had sold his dictionaries by weight to a grocer in the town, and those belonging to Bineau had been stolen in spite of some macaronic verses, threatening a terrible punishment for such a crime, written on the first page. Larmuzeaux's books bore this inscription:—

" This book is my own,
As Paris the king's own."

But more than one king has lost Paris; and in like manner did Larmuzeaux lose his books. Dodin's were ornamented with a little vignette, representing a man on a gibbet, with this motto,—

Aspice Pierrot hung on a pole,
For having hunc librum stole;
If Pierrot reddidisset,
Pierrot hung non fuisset.

Others decorated the outsides of their books with every ingenious device that can be obtained through the agency of a pair of compasses; lozenges, circles, ovals, were twined in an inextricable cabalistic confusion on the covers; still some sacrilegious hand ruthlessly severed every tie between the bindings and the College-books. A few cunning ones tried to preserve their property by writing their names at the fiftieth page, immediately there was a scarcity of page fifty; in a word, every new method adopted to insure safety, only led to a more certain destruction.

Never were so many classical books bought in Laon as during this year; but the parents raised such a loud outcry against this increase of their bills, that Mr. Tassin (who being allowed a large discount by the bookseller in the town, witnessed these mutilations with secret satisfaction) saw himself compelled to set on foot a search for the criminal,—a useless trouble, as no discovery ever took place.

In the midst of all these disorders, of which he happily knew nothing, Charles Marie had the character of being the best boy in the eighth class, and every Saturday he enjoyed the honour of being proclaimed as dux. These little triumphs made Sophy Carillon very happy; she always boasted of them to Mr. Delteil whenever she met him,—an event of rare occurrence, the Professor greedily seizing on the intervals between his class-hours to work like a galley-slave at his great dictionary.

He told the milliner one day that he would make a point of seeing the Professor of the eighth class to ask him whether Charles Marie was not fit for promotion to a higher class even before the end of the year; and some days afterwards, he informed Sophy that the master of the eighth intended making a proposal of the kind to the Principal, but that it would be as well for Miss Carillon to pay Mr. Tassin a visit herself.

"Well, Doctor," said the eldest of the sisters to Mr. Triballet, "our dear little nephew is going to be moved into the seventh class, he is too far on already for the eighth."

The Doctor had ceased his attacks against Latin, since the ridiculous rage he had put himself in on the day Mr. Delteil dined with the Misses Carillon. His passion had cost him too dearly; he remained away two days, fearing to be badly received, and Sophy had been obliged to send for him under the pretext that her nervous attacks had become worse.

"He is going to turn out a learned man, I see," replied he. "After all, it's just as good as anything else."

"What a happy day that will be for me," said Sophy, "when he takes his degree!"

"You must make him study medicine, madam," said Mr. Triballet, "and I'll give him up all my patients."

"But you have got none," laughed Bertha.

"I might have more than I could manage, if I chose," retorted the Doctor, "and I would willingly resume practice for some years to come, if by so doing I could be of use to Charles Marie."

"How good you are, Doctor!" cried Sophy.

"Oh! as for good," said Bertha, "there are days" . . .

"Come, come, Bertha; you know we have made friends with the Doctor."

"I cannot forgive him for having shewn such contempt of my fritters," returned Bertha.

"Pray, what has become of Miss Caroline?" said Mr. Triballet, by way of changing the conversation.

"She is in her own room," answered Bertha.

"I don't know whether it is my fancy," said the Doctor, "but it certainly appears to me that we see less of her than formerly."

"You are right enough, Doctor," replied Sophy; "she is grown sad, likes to be alone, and very often, I think, that her eyes are red."

"Bless me! is she going to be ill, too?" exclaimed the Doctor.

"You ought to speak to her," said Sophy; "Bertha and I will go this afternoon a little earlier than usual to the Promenade St. Just, and it will appear quite accidental your finding her alone, when you come to fetch us."

"Ah! that will do," replied Mr. Triballet; "depend on it I will find out what is the matter with her."

But the Doctor had reckoned without his host; tête-à-tête with Caroline, when she had answered all the queries he could think of as to the state of her health, the conversation languished in such a manner that it was difficult to keep it from dying away altogether. Caroline Carillon had reached the age of twenty-eight, still preserving all the gaiety and cheerfulness of a child; active, and tenderly attached to her sisters, she had made light of passing whole nights working at the fine embroidery, their principal article of commerce; her only amusement and relaxation consisted in singing ballads to her own accompaniment on a little old spinnet. All of a sudden, she had fits of low spirits, she grew pale, never spoke to her sisters, scarcely wishing them good-morning. If Sophy complained of this change of behaviour, she would burst into tears, rush up stairs, and lock herself into her own room. Mr. Triballet was not the man to sound the depths of this mental sorrow.

"My spirits always flag towards evening," said Caroline. "My heart sinks, and I am very sad."

"Ah, my dear child!" returned Mr. Triballet, "you want some amusement—that's all."

A painful smile crossed Caroline's lips.

"I have a presentiment," she answered, "of some great misfortune. I feel as if I walked under a great black shadow."

"What do you mean by such fancies?" cried the astonished Dr. Triballet. "Why don't you go out and walk with your sisters?"

"Because I feel that I should only make them sad, without their being able to cheer me. I am often very angry with myself for behaving as I do; but there seems a spell on me."

"All this is mere fancy, madam," said the Doctor; "it will pass away as it came."

"I do not think so, Doctor."

"And since when have you had these feelings?"

"Ever since Mr. Delteil's arrival," she replied.

"You don't mean to say so!" ejaculated Mr. Triballet, trying to open his eyes very wide;—"The Professor? Well, that's very singular."

As he said this, the Doctor looked earnestly at Caroline to see if she were laughing at him; but her face never changed, nor did she appear to be aware of the earnest look with which the Doctor was watching her.

To carry this extraordinary information to Sophy as quickly as possible, was the Doctor's first impulse; so he took advantage of Charles Marie's coming home to run

as fast as his fat short legs could carry him to the Promenade St. Just. By the time he reached the sister, he was puffing away violently enough to have blown down a tree.

He fired off such a volley of *ohs* and *ahs*, that Sophy was divided between a violent desire to laugh and the dread of hearing of some terrible news.

"The house is on fire!" bawled Mr. Triballet at last.

"What! our house?" screamed Bertha.

"That Mr. Delteil . . . O dear!"

"Speak plainly, Mr. Triballet, I beg of you; you are frightening us to death."

"I always told you so," exclaimed Mr. Triballet.

"But what has he done?" cried both sisters at once.

"He has bewitched your sister Caroline," replied the Doctor, solemnly.

The dead in the cemetery of St. Just might have been roused by the shouts of laughter with which the two young women received this lugubrious information.

"Laugh as much as you please," said Mr. Triballet, quite crest-fallen at the manner with which what he had thought would have made such an impression, had been received. "She told me so herself."

"Caroline?"

"Herself."

"My good Doctor," said Sophy, "Mr. Delteil will drive you crazy."

" I think he is crazy already," said Bertha.

" It's too bad not to believe me," groaned Mr. Triballet.

" Well, do tell us in a reasonable way what passed between you and Caroline ?"

" First of all, she declares she is not ill, but that she has felt very odd ever since the Professor came to lodge in your house."—Here the Doctor stopped.

" Well, and what then ?" asked Bertha.

" Is that not enough for you ?" retorted the Doctor testily.

" No—I want to know the end," said Bertha.

" There is no end to know, Miss Bertha," replied Mr. Triballet. " For my part, I was so frightened by what I had heard, that I ran here directly."

" You are very kind always, Doctor," said Sophy, " and I thank you for your interest in us all ; but I assure you that in this case you have been alarmed without a cause. Though Caroline has never said one word to me, I perfectly comprehend what she meant to tell you. She merely intended to say, that her low spirits began about the time of Mr. Delteil's arrival."

" Yes, she positively said that," answered the Doctor.

" But she never told you that Mr. Delteil was the cause of her being out of spirits."

" That's true !" exclaimed Mr. Triballet, seeing the whole pile he had built upon the road to the Promenade crumble to pieces.

"So, Doctor, confess now, that you took it into your wise head that poor Caroline was in love?"

"No, no—not exactly," stammered the discomfited Mr. Triballet.

"Then what in the world did you think?"

"Humph!" sighed the Doctor, driven to his wit's end.

"If Mr. Delteil had heard you!"

"And what then?" asked the Doctor.

"Why, you would have sent HIM out of HIS senses, at all events. I should have been very vexed, too, for he is exceedingly kind to us. Do you know he advises us to send Charles Marie to the College only as day-scholar;—that is to say, that he should only attend during class hours, and he will help him to prepare his lessons at home."

"But why does he advise this?" asked the suspicious Mr. Triballet.

"Why? for a very good reason. Mr. Delteil tells me that the seventh class is full of bad boys, and so he thinks that our Charles Marie had better be as little with them as possible; and then as my nephew is far behind many of his class-fellows, Mr. Delteil will be able, if we make this change, to give him some private lessons."

"As you have set your heart on making the boy a learned man, of course you are right to follow the Professor's advice."

When the two sisters got home, they found Charles

Marie busily conning his lesson for the next day. Indeed, the child was so eager to learn, that had Sophy not carried away the candle, he would have spent the greater part of his nights in reading. In the school-walks, he would slip away from his companions into some retired part of the wood, where more than once he had been caught poring over one of the books Mr. Delteil had borrowed from the public library. So he was looked upon with an evil eye by the Bineau set, who had at first reckoned on him as an ally; but Charles Marie, with his dreamy contemplative nature, was incapable of taking any part in the mischievous pranks of his school-fellows.

One day Dodin proposed to him to get hold of Larmuzeaux's frog. Charles Marie, who had long pitied the fate of the poor little beast, shut up as it was in a school-desk, supposed that Larmuzeaux meant to set it at liberty; but when the drum-major explained that he intended to fry the frog, Charles Marie turned away in unspeakable disgust, and never would have anything to do with him again.

Charles Marie's favourite companion was one of the drummers, despised by the rest of the Collegians, because the roll of his drum procured him his education gratis. This boy's name was Pelletier, and he was the son of a poor mason in Laon; but he was only known in the College by the contemptuous name of Drumstick.

Charles Marie became a fast friend of poor drumstick;

drawn on by one of those strong and inexplicable sympathies which had led Mr. Delteil on his arrival in the town, to take up his lodging with the three sisters. The son of Pelletier the mason, who had begun his studies in the charity school of the Ignorantin Brethren, soon inoculated Charles Marie with his own passion for collecting fossil shells.

The mountain on which Laon stands is composed of various strata, formed in certain parts by numberless white and friable shells, closely dove-tailed into one another, and crumbling into dust at the slightest touch. Pelletier, however, had found some spots on the hill where these shells possessed more solidity. He made the discovery in this way: happening one day to go into the public library, he had caught sight in a glass-case, lying between an old stuffed baboon and a dozen of Roman coins, of some specimens of these fossils, presented to the town by an amateur.

He asked some questions about these shells, the value of which he had no idea of, as he saw them in such abundance on the mountain, and it was then he learned how difficult it was to obtain any of them whole. From that time he devoted all his leisure hours to hunting for these precious shells, with the wish to increase the collection in the library. But as his duties as drummer left him both less liberty and fewer spare half-hours than the other Collegians enjoyed, he trained Charles Marie to the search after these fossils, and between them they

soon contrived to gather a number of curiosities, which they understood very little about at first, but that ultimately led them to the study of natural history.

The public library of Laon forms part of the town-hall; its entrance is by a little low shabby door, opening from a garden, and which the clerks in the office can see from their desks. Old Bineau, who was at the head of the office, noticed the assiduous visits of Charles Marie and his friend Pelletier to the library.

He was surprised; first, because the boys were so young, and then because the establishment was such a desert; the librarian was a priest, who had belonged to one of those numerous congregations suppressed after the Revolution of July; a man who went every day at eleven o'clock to say mass, returning afterwards to wait among the numerous volumes bequeathed by the Benedictines, for readers who never came.

Having once taken his place in his leathern arm-chair, placed just under a stuffed crocodile, which hung down from the roof, the librarian never stirred, and looked far more like some large old folio seated, than a human being. The complete absence of visitors, the silence of the large hall, the dust, the great quartos that never changed their places, had made of the old priest a sort of voiceless machine, moved by a spring to rise from his seat at four o'clock in the afternoon, and brought back by the same spring the next day as the clock struck twelve.

"What brings those two little Collegians here?" asked the Registrar of the town-hall porter.

"I don't exactly know, sir. They come with their pockets full of shells, which they place in the glass-case."

"What for?" thought the puzzled Mr. Bineau. He soon, however, obtained a key to this mystery; for at a meeting of the town-council, of which he was a member, it fell to him to answer a letter from the librarian, in which the corporation of Laon were requested to allot a small sum out of the municipal funds for enriching the library with some new books; in the subjoined list were three works relating to the history of fossils. Mr. Bineau said to his son, "Why don't you go to the public library to amuse yourself on holidays?"

Little Bineau thought his father was joking.

"Because it is no fun," answered he.

"That must be a mistake," returned the Registrar, "for your school-fellows go there readily enough."

"Which of them?" asked little Bineau.

"Miss Carillon's nephew."

"Charles Marie?" inquired Bineau the younger.

"Yes, with another whom I do not know. They amuse themselves rationally; they bring fossil shells. These children try to be useful to the town. Why couldn't you bring shells also?"

"I bring shells?" exclaimed little Bineau, in a tone of the supremest contempt.

"And pray, why not?" persisted the father.

"That is the way," said Madame Bineau, now chiming in, "that little by little, people get a position in the world."

"To be sure," added the Registrar, "and then, some day, if you liked it, I could get you named librarian—one can't begin too soon to look after the future."

"Books are a great bore," said little Bineau.

"It's very easy to say that books are a bore, but what do you mean to do a few years hence?"

"You have nobody to blame but yourself, Mr. Bineau," said the mother; "what else could you expect after stuffing his head full of that useless music, as you have done; he thinks of nothing else,—a fine profession, to be sure, that of a musician!"

"You must go to-morrow to the library,—do you hear me? look about you, ask questions, appear as if you were taking an interest in what goes on there," insisted old Bineau; "will you go? I will give you something."

"Oh! well then, I will go," said his son, who immediately thought of taking his friends there with him.

"There are some very curious things in the library, I assure you," went on the Registrar; "stuffed animals, a collection of medals, pictures, all very amusing; ask to see the engravings. I only wish I had the time myself to go there; it is so easy to learn in those places, for you have everything under your hand.... Remember to look at the portraits of the great men of Laon, and look at the paintings of the famous Plumet, (I knew

him very well, we used to call him then little Plumet,) well, his paintings are masterpieces in body-colours. Our library, too, is very rich,—it contains, at least, twenty thousand volumes ; and very lately, a connoisseur offered the town-council a round sum of money for the stuffed crocodile hanging up there, but we refused, for such sort of curiosities make a great show in a public establishment. Don't forget to ask for La Fontaine's Fables, a book worth a mint of money, it has an engraving at each page; then there is another book which *no* money could buy, I mean the Expedition in Egypt, presented to the town by Monsieur Talleyrand ; there is also the prison of the Bastile sculptured on a stone brought from the Bastile itself; and besides all these, there is the Cathedral of Laon ;—ah ! that is something extraordinary, made out of a pack of cards ; it took twenty years, at least, to do. There's plenty to look at, I can tell you, and you can't see it all in one day."

Bineau had no difficulty in persuading Lagache to go with him the next day to the library ; they were full of curiosity as to what Charles Marie did there. They went in just as Mr. Delteil had asked the librarian to help him to seek for some particular book in an adjoining room. The two friends, therefore, were left alone in the great hall, and the first thing that attracted their eyes was the stuffed crocodile suspended from the ceiling, grinning at an ostrich without feathers, placed on a shelf opposite. Not far from the crocodile, some portable

library ladders, on one of which Lagache mounted, in order to touch the crocodile, which began to swing.

" See," said he to Bineau, " if anybody is coming."

" Nobody," answered Bineau.'

" Then take that other ladder, and we will have some fun."

Having placed the steps opposite each other, Lagache gave the crocodile a thump with his fist, and sent it towards Bineau, who flung it back to his friend; the two Collegians were in high delight at having this frightful animal, with its terrible teeth, for a plaything; but Bineau giving a badly-aimed blow, the cord by which the crocodile was secured, being probably very rotten, suddenly broke, and down fell the monstrous reptile on a plaster bust of Louis the Eighteenth. Bineau himself was very near rolling from top to bottom of the steps.

" Oh dear, oh dear!" he exclaimed.

Lagache had already come down from his ladder, and was meditating how to repair the disaster. Louis the Eighteenth's nose was broken, and a great gash in the crocodile was letting out all the fictitious entrails with which it had been furnished by the stuffer.

Lagache turned Louis the Eighteenth's bust with its face to the wall, making him appear as a very ill-bred prince, instead of, according to princely custom, facing the entrance-door, and seeming to welcome visitors with a benignant smile.

"But the crocodile! What on earth shall we do with that?"

"We must hide it."

"It is quite spoiled," sighed Bineau, who was thinking of the immense value assigned to it by his father only the evening before; "and it costs dear, do you know?"

"If I could only get it on the hook again!" sighed out Lagache.

"But its stomach is all open—oh dear! and one of the teeth is broken out."

"One more or one less can't signify much," said Lagache. "Did any one see us come in?"

"I don't think so," answered Bineau. "We have just time to get away."

"We can't leave the crocodile on the floor. Every one knows it is not old enough yet to walk by itself."

At this moment footsteps were audible on the stairs.

"We had better be off," said Lagache.

"Come this way," whispered Bineau, who, having often played about in the town-hall, knew of a private passage contiguous to the library.

Lagache followed, dragging the crocodile after him. As they reached a window looking out on the promenade, they heard the shrill voices of children quarrelling below.

"They are Tantonians," said he; "here's something for them—away he goes!" And so saying, without any hesitation, he flung the crocodile out of the window. A

great cry of terror arose, and the two culprits then took to their heels.

In the meantime Mr. Delteil returned with the librarian, who had ended by finding a very rare and precious little Greek book; in the hall they found Charles Marie, who had brought some choice specimens of shells, which he had found on the mountain.

"We shall very soon have our books on natural history," said the librarian to him; "and then I will teach you to distinguish the different families to which these fossils belong."

Mr. Delteil was in the very act of bidding Charles Marie make haste and finish arranging his shells, that they might return together by the ramparts, when a faint sound, like distant shouting, was heard, growing more and more distinct with each passing instant.

"It seems to me that I hear a noise!" exclaimed the librarian, whose life usually flowed on in the deepest silence, the town-hall being in a very retired situation; "it seems to me that I hear a noise!" The clamour of many voices continuing to increase, the librarian opened a window and looked out. "I see a great many people at the end of Townhall Street," he said; "nevertheless, it is not the time of drawing for the conscription."

"Some accident must have occurred," suggested Mr. Delteil; "perhaps a workman has fallen from the roof of some house."

Townhall Street was not large enough to contain the

spectators, whom curiosity had assembled, and it was clear that the Commissary of Police had some difficulty in keeping them in order.

"It is some beast!" exclaimed Charles Marie.

The librarian started, and cast his eyes up to the ceiling. "Our crocodile, I declare!" cried he, sinking into a chair all in a maze.

"What!" cried Mr. Delteil, "the crocodile from the ceiling!" and he stared at the librarian as if such an assertion needed some explanation. But at this moment a crowd of people were forcing their way through the iron gate of the town-hall; the clerks ran out of their offices, fearing that there was going to be an *émeute*, while the porter tried in vain to close the great entrance. Mr. Bineau was one of the first to make his appearance, a pen behind his ear, and was well-nigh bursting into tears, when he beheld the body of the crocodile stretched on a shutter, and the head borne along by the town-drummer.

Everybody had some comment to make on this extraordinary event. The little boys belonging to Mr. Tanton's school went about telling right and left how the great beast had leapt from the top of the ramparts, very nearly crushing them to death.

At the entrance of the library, the Commissary of Police intimated his wish for silence, by ordering his drummer to beat the drum. "Gentlemen and fellow-citizens," said the Commissary, "I beg the favour of you

all to abstain from going up into the library, where a great pressure might cause mischief still greater than that we now deplore; I have sent already for the Judge of Instruction. The only persons who should enter are the four witnesses, who are also victims in this matter; the bearers of the luckless animal; and the Registrar, Mr. Bineau, *locum tenens* for the Prefect, at this moment unfortunately absent on a progress through the department. So abominable a crime demands a strict inquiry, and I give you my word that the delinquent shall be punished with the utmost rigour of the law."

Having thus delivered himself, the Commissary of Police left the crowd, by this time in a state of fierce agitation, and every moment becoming more dense.

"Mr. Librarian," said Mr. Bineau, "do you identify this crocodile as the one which was formerly suspended from the ceiling of the library?"

But the fall had rendered the crocodile a most disgusting object; and the musty old drugs in its inside, thus suddenly exposed to the air, sent forth an insupportable effluvium.

"Commissary of the Police," continued Mr. Bineau, "I descry in this business not a simple infraction of the laws, but an act of horrid revenge. A year ago, a gentleman in our neighbourhood made an offer to the town-council for this crocodile, then in perfect preservation; but jealously tenacious of the valuable possessions of the city, my colleagues and I refused to part with so precious

a specimen of natural history. Would it not be right to summon this amateur before our tribunals? Who knows but that, irritated by our refusal, he may have bribed some one to destroy our crocodile?"

"What was the name of this gentleman?" asked the Commissary.

"Monsieur Tétard, a landed proprietor at Vorges."

"Ah! he is dead," . . . replied the Commissary. "Allow me, Mr. Bineau, to pursue this inquiry in a more regular way."

On being interrogated, the librarian answered that at exactly twelve o'clock the crocodile was still suspended as usual by a rope passed through a hook in the ceiling, that at two o'clock he left the hall with Mr. Delteil, to give that gentleman a book, and that when he returned he found Charles Marie arranging some fossil shells that he had brought in."

"Then, sir," said the Commissary, "you are certain that the crocodile was pulled down during your momentary absence."

"Yes," answered the librarian.

Charles Marie deponed to having entered the library, to having found the door open, to not having noticed the disappearance of the crocodile; unfortunately, he also declared that he had come there between half-past two o'clock and a quarter to three, precisely the very time that Mr. Tanton's four pupils said the monster had tumbled down upon them. Every eye was fixed on

Charles Marie, who as yet was not aware of the weight and extent of accusation impending over him. Mr. Delteil was more agitated than if he had committed the crime himself; for, from the time he had known the boy up to the present moment, never had he detected in him any tendency to mischief. The porter of the prefecture stated that he had seen no one go into the library but Mr. Delteil and Charles Marie.

"Who or what could have induced you, young man, to commit such a deplorable assault?" cried the indignant Mr. Bineau.

Charles Marie at first thought that this question was addressed to some one else; when he understood it was to him, he exclaimed with a burst of indignation, "Do you mean me, sir?"

"Yes, you," reiterated the Commissary.

"He is not the culprit," exclaimed Mr. Delteil.

"Nevertheless, Mr. Professor, no one but he has been in the library."

"It is impossible," said Mr. Delteil; "I am sure that child cannot be the real culprit."

"Not a day passes," says one of Mr. Tanton's scholars, "that the Collegians do not invent something or other to plague us."

"You hear this yourself, Mr. Professor," remarked the Commissary of Police.

"Yes; but I still say that you will find Charles Marie not to be the real delinquent."

But as he spoke, doubt began to creep into the mind of even the professor of the seventh class, who kept watching his little favourite's face, to see if he could detect any wildness in his eyes; for nothing short of a momentary insanity could account for an action so contrary to the boy's usual habits. After all, was it not possible that witnessing as he did the tricks daily played by his school-fellows, he might all at once have been seized by a violent desire to surpass by one daring act, all their glorious deeds?

"We must go to the Mayor's," said the Commissary of Police.

"What!" cried the alarmed Mr. Delteil, "are you going to take Charles Marie there? What will the Misses Carillon say?"

"You had better go and break the news to them, sir," replied the Commissary; "I only do my duty. Come, gentlemen, let us go."

Charles Marie followed the Commissary without shewing any emotion.

"What a hardened villain!" cried Mr. Bineau.

When the Commissary, the accused, and the witnesses came out at the door, they found the crowd, which had gone on increasing, waiting impatiently to know who was the criminal; from the excitement, one might have supposed that the Cathedral of Laon at least had been spirited away. Some traces of former popular traditions are still rife in the country parts of France, though be-

coming fainter with each passing generation ; now, the fall of the crocodile had revived in some memories the legend of the "hanging bone," an immense bone of a whale, which once upon a time was to be seen hanging from the vaulted roof of the Cathedral portal. "Who had placed the bone there, and why ?" Tradition echoed the question, without ever finding a solution, leaving full latitude to the curious in demonology. One day, however, the "hanging bone" disappeared, and then another question was mooted, How or by whom carried away ? No one ever knew or told ; but the "hanging bone" remained suspended in the recollections of the inhabitants of Laon for many and many a year.

The old people in the crowd were telling this tale, and unhesitatingly supposing the fall of the crocodile to be owing to similar supernatural agency ; when the Commissary of Police appeared holding Charles Marie by the hand, a positive yell of surprise broke from the crowd.

"That's him ! that's the rogue !" shouted the four Tantonians to the mob, pointing their fingers at Charles Marie.

"I must go and warn Miss Sophy," said Mr. Delteil to himself, quitting the Commissary and his train as fast as he could.

Charles Marie, though forsaken by his only friend, did not lose heart. He listened to the remarks of the crowd.

"Is it possible ?"

" Such a beautiful fair child !"

" He seems so gentle."

" At his age !"

" Yes, only think, he pulled down the crocodile !"

" He meant to crush the children."

" He'll come to a bad end."

" There's all the benefit of a grand education !"

" If I were his father !"

" He must be crazy."

" Who ever would have imagined such a thing, to look at him ?"

Some went so far as to liken Charles Marie to Passovine. " He'll do just the same when he is as old," said some.

In spite of all these accusations, Charles Marie remained self-possessed. He neither hung his head like a detected criminal, nor did he hold it insolently. At last they reached the *Mairie*, where the Commissary was introduced into the Secretary's private room, while the accused waited in the office.

" Bless my heart, sir," exclaimed the Secretary, when he had heard the Commissary's report; " what have you been thinking of ? For a mere trick, for the sake of a nasty stuffed crocodile, you go and bring the whole town about our ears. At the most, it is a petty offence, that ought to have been taken before a justice of the peace, and here you magnify it into a criminal prosecution."

" But, Mr. Secretary, it was Mr. Bineau who said," . . .

" It's no business of Mr. Bineau's; because some old fool once offered to buy this crocodile of the town, every one fancies it must be full of golden eggs. It is broken to pieces, is it? Well, so much the better. It is really making the authorities ridiculous, to come with such preposterous complaints. Give the little boy a good scolding, and send him home. I won't hear any more about such nonsense."

The Commissary of Police, who thought he had given a striking proof of patriotism, and was prouder of this arrest than if he had discovered a conspiracy, was sorely mortified.

" You had better let the little boy go out by the back door, that no tumult may be excited in the square."

After having listened to a severe philippic from the Commissary of Police, in whose glowing words there breathed all the bitterness of a failure, Charles Marie was making his way home along the ramparts, when he met his aunt Bertha, crying bitterly, and going towards the *Mairie.*

" You naughty boy," cried she, clasping him in her arms, " how unhappy you have made us all!" It was only when Charles Marie saw Bertha crying, that he too began to weep.

" Sophy has had a violent fit of hysterics," continued she, " so let us run home as fast as we can. She thinks you are in prison."

In the shop was Mr. Triballet talking very loud,

and Mr. Delteil in a state of collapse on a chair in a corner.

"This is all your fault, sir," bawled the fat doctor; "a misfortune ought to be revealed with some precaution. You know how sensitive Miss Sophy is; why, sir, you might have killed her on the spot!"

Charles Marie's entrance put a stop to the discussion.

"Here he is, all safe!" cried Bertha, catching him up and carrying him to where Sophy was lying, with Caroline by her side.

"Oh! Charles Marie, are you capable of such things?"

"No, dear aunt, indeed I am not," replied Charles Marie.

"Then it was not you, was it not?" cried Sophy, pressing him to her heart.

"I told those gentlemen so," said poor Mr. Delteil.

That evening the streets of Laon were full of groups, censuring (but under their breath) the Secretary's conduct. Mr. Tanton was the most openly indignant, for he had seen his expected vengeance slip through his fingers. He had hoped that a prosecution before the assizes would bring to light all the exploits of the Collegians, and he had already made out a long list of grievances, when he was told that Charles Marie had been set at liberty,—a proof that the day's incident would have no further result.

Mr. Tanton was in the habit of going every evening

to play a poule at billiards, in a shabby little coffee-house in Portcullis Street. To suit his stumps, he had had a cue made expressly for himself, shaped like a crook, and he managed it in general very cleverly. But that evening he missed the very best stroke, for he was giving vent to his anger while he played, and his rage at such a promising business ending in smoke, deprived him of his usual dexterity.

"What!" said he, "is a pupil of Mr. Tassin to be allowed to violate and fling away the treasures of a public institution, without being brought to justice? If I had only touched the tail of the crocodile I should be safely lodged in prison at this very moment. But these gentlemen of the College may take all sorts of liberties. . . . You'll see they will end by setting fire to the town . . . and all because they have a drum-major."

It was only on Mr. Tassin's return from a walk to the wood with his pupils, that he heard of the event; without a moment's delay he went to the Commissary of Police, in order to see if the matter could be hushed up. He understood what scandal such an adventure would give rise to, and the dangerous rebound it might have for him.

The next day after class hours, he assembled all his pupils, made a long speech, the purport of which was, that he would visit the least infraction of discipline with the severest punishment. He then called forward Charles Marie, and by roll of drum rusticated him for a whole

fortnight. Mr. Delteil, who had been robbed during the class of his pens and ink, and who had intended to make a representation to the Principal on that subject, was so shocked by this condemnation, which he felt to be so undeserved, that he forgot his own interests in his anxiety to comfort Charles Marie, and he went home with him along the ramparts, and without having made any complaint as to his loss. This time he used a thousand precautions in breaking the news to the milliner. Sophy, in her indignation, was for going at once to the head master, but the old Professor dissuaded her from this step.

"My nephew is dishonoured by this punishment," said she.

"Let the storm blow over," observed Mr. Delteil. "At the end of a week no one will think any more about the matter. Charles Marie is not guilty, but you will never persuade Mr. Tassin of his innocence."

In the meantime the *Laon Observer* appeared on the Sunday with a thundering article from the pen of Mr. Bineau, delighted to have it in his power to hit the secretary of the *Mairie* a hard blow. This effusion occupied the principal columns, and of course went the round of the town.

"Last Thursday," wrote Mr. Bineau, "our rich library became the scene of a great disaster to natural history. That rare animal, with which the generosity of Mr. Duval, on his deathbed, endowed the town, is entirely

lost to science—a valuable specimen, and one to be long regretted, of the success of our scientific men in their intrepid labours in the desert. During the temporary absence of the learned librarian, a murderous hand severed the cord by which the voracious reptile was suspended to the ceiling, and there is every reason to suppose that, in its descent, it fell upon the bust of a Bourbon, which has thus been mutilated—a fact which sufficiently proves the uselessness of exposing to public view the representative of a branch which no longer reigns in France. Nevertheless, connoisseurs will regret the loss of this piece of sculpture,—the production of an experienced chisel.

"Although the inquiry into this case has not been carried on in the spirit which so serious a misfortune required, there have been found near the bust a few scales of the child of the desert. Some children were engaged in their innocent sports on the public walk, when, oh frightful surprise! the ferocious oviparous animal, impelled by an unerring hand, darts from the window of the library he should never have quitted, and tumbles to the ground at a hairbreadth from the youthful ones at play. We have indeed been within an ace of having additional losses to deplore. Alarm is excited from one end of the town to the other by the terrified screams of those children; the inhabitants raise a cry of vengeance; the mutilated body of the dweller in the Red Sea is brought back, followed by a numerous and

mournful crowd, who feel the full extent of this irreparable calamity.

"The Museum of Natural History in Paris had not to exhibit to its visitors a finer specimen of the lounger of the banks of the Ganges; and the town-council, zealous in its care of the interests of the city, thought it their duty, in spite of liberal offers, which might have assisted in paying off some of the debts of the town, to retain possession of that creature, that, notwithstanding its cruel appetite, we must call the Crocodile.

"An inquiry was instituted and the delinquent discovered—*lux facta est.* It was a child, who never suspected the gravity of his crime."

But Bineau and Lagache, in the excitement produced by this memorable feat, could not keep their own secret. The Silk-worm Company soon came to know who were the true perpetrators of the assault in the public library. Lagache, as a trophy of victory, had kept one of the crocodile's teeth,—a great addition to the riches of his collection,—the fruit of plunder. This piece of knowledge was pondered over by Robert, who, although one of the Association, was often made a victim of by his friends.

As Robert never studied, he was always the last in themes. In that respect he was *ex æquo* with Dodin, Bineau, and all those who did not condescend to trouble themselves about the themes given by Mr. Delteil; but Madame Robert was not to be taken in by her son's

account of such matters, and every Saturday read the school-certificate, holding it in one hand, while with the other she grasped a good birch switch. Robert always saw the approach of Saturday evening with terror, for Saturday evening regularly brought him his quota of the rod. His friends quizzed him dreadfully for being still whipped at twelve years old.

In spite of this severe punishment—in spite of the jeering—in spite of the shame and the pain, Robert did not study a jot the more. His mind in fact was too full of the following problem,—How to get a good place in the class for themes, without taking the trouble to do them. Nature had made him cunning and ill-natured. He gave a helping hand to Nature, and turned tell-tale, a function in schools which, in the world, bears the title of spy or informer.

His discovery about the crocodile appeared to him so important, that he did not hesitate to go at once to the Principal. He named the real culprits, and went into the smallest details.

"But where are your proofs?" said Mr. Tassin.

"I don't know what I have done to Mr. Delteil, sir. I am always the last in the class, and mamma beats me every Saturday."

"I am not talking to you about that just now," said Mr. Tassin; "what I am asking you for are proofs, for you have come to me to tell tales of your friends."

"If you would only say a word in my favour, sir, to

Mr. Delteil, so that he might give me a better character, and then my mother would not beat me."

"Do you know, Master Robert," said the Principal, "that I have a great mind to call Bineau and Lagache here, and to examine them in your presence."

"I have proofs, sir," answered Robert.

"Well then, why don't you speak out?"

"But, sir, will you be so good as to ask Mr. Delteil not to hate me so much? I should not mind if he gave me the last place but one, only not the last."

"You are a sharp lad of your age, Master Robert. I understand you now—you want to tell me your proofs—give and take, eh! Well, I will speak to Mr. Delteil about you."

"Ah, Mr. Tassin, how kind of you! The proofs are in Bineau's desk. It was he and Lagache together who unhooked the crocodile, and, when it tumbled down, one of its teeth fell out. Lagache kept the tooth; I saw it only just now."

"Very well, sir, now go back to the school-room and work; you are an idle fellow. You have done right in telling me this, though the end you had in view was not much to your credit. However, should you ever hear anything derogatory to the College, or against me or the professors, come and tell me, and I will give you, that is, if what you have to say is worth it, ten exemptions."

Presently, Mr. Tassin unexpectedly entered Mr. Del-

teil's class, and began a general search of the school-desks, which brought about the seizure of Larmuzeaux's frog, of Dodin's cooking utensils, Cucquigny's colour-box, of the famous crocodile's tooth, and a multitude of things forming part of Bineau and Lagache's museum.

The four boys were sentenced to remain in school during play-hours, and thought themselves very lucky to get off so easily; all the Principal's anger was poured out on Mr. Delteil's devoted head.

"What, sir," he exclaimed, "do you allow your pupils to keep live animals, to cook in their desks, and to play at games of hazard?"

The Principal had just discovered a sort of roulette.

"Is this, sir, what you call looking after your pupils? They seem to do whatever they please in class-time; a pretty figure your class will make at the end of the year when the Inspectors come round—and who will get the blame? why, of course, I shall, and all because your head is full of other things than your duties as Professor."

Mr. Delteil endeavoured to speak, but Mr. Tassin went on in a loud voice:—

"Take care, sir; I shall keep my eye on you and your pupils, who, after all, are less to blame than you. I look upon you as art and part in all that has gone wrong since the beginning of the year, and to relieve myself from all responsibility, and to prove that my superintendence extends even to the smallest details, I shall think it

my duty to send in a special report of what I have discovered to the Rector."

Mr. Delteil remained as if stunned for some minutes after the Principal had left the room. He did not dare to look at his pupils, for fear he should see them grinning at the severe lecture he had received.

To conceal his embarrassment, he began arranging his papers very slowly, resolved to work no more at his beloved dictionary during class-hours. In five minutes his irresolution gave place to a firm determination.

"Master Cucquigny," he began, "you are the one who paint such admirable caricatures; since you have so much taste for drawing, you will have the goodness to make me a map of France, with the names of the principal towns and rivers."

Before the end of the class, he had set more tasks than he had done during the whole course of the year. Quite contrary to his usual habits, he left his pulpit or reading desk, and paced up and down the class, making the brick-floor ring again with the tread of his thick-soled old boots.

Mr. Tassin was no sooner in possession of the famous crocodile's tooth, than he sent to beg Mr. Bineau would be so obliging as to call at the College.

"I have been informed, sir," said the Principal to the Registrar, "of the great interest you took in that affair about the crocodile, and of your endeavours to discover

the culprit; your zeal was equally meritorious, though it so signally failed."

"It was by no fault of mine," replied Mr. Bineau; "if the Commissary of Police had allowed me to carry on the inquiry as I proposed to do, the nephew of the Misses Carillon, believe me, would have received a good lesson from the laws he had broken."

"I have been told, also," continued Mr. Tassin, "that you are the author of the paper in the *Observer* on the same subject, an article as well expressed as conceived." Mr. Bineau bowed.

"Now, having rendered due homage to your brilliant pen, which condensed into a few eloquent lines the indignation we all feel, permit me, Mr. Bineau, to question its prudence."

Mr. Bineau made a face like an author whose play is unanimously rejected.

"You did not consider the drift of your article sufficiently, Mr. Bineau, or you would not have written it; you, indeed, beyond every one, ought not to have penned it."

"I am at a loss to understand you, sir," said Mr. Bineau, drily.

"Do you recognise this?" said the head master, taking the crocodile's tooth from the drawer of his table.

"It is the tooth of some animal," replied Mr. Bineau; "perhaps the tooth of the crocodile!"

"I have pushed my inquiries much further than you

have done, Mr. Bineau, and I am under the painful necessity of informing you, that the Misses Carillon's nephew is perfectly innocent, and that it is Master Louis Bineau, your son, who is the guilty one."

"Impossible!" cried the Registrar.

"And his accomplice," went on Mr. Tassin, calmly, "is the son of Mrs. Lagache."

"What is all this you are telling me, Mr. Tassin?"

"Would you write your paper over again now, Mr. Bineau? Do not mistake me, I think your indignation perfectly natural, as even I, who cannot boast the honour of having been born within your town walls, completely and with all my heart share your feelings; but the days of Brutus are gone by; most certainly, I would not condemn my own son, nor would I be the ruin of an establishment which has rendered some service to education. The College has numerous enemies in Laon, Mr. Bineau, who are waiting, in silence, an opportune moment to overthrow it, and, without intending it, (I am sure,) you have placed yourself among them. With your paper in their hands, they will make use of an accident for which I am in no way answerable, and they will have a right to say,—'It is not we who accuse Mr. Principal Tassin; it is not we who attack the College; it is a father, who sends his son there, an upright man, unable to repress his well-founded indignation;' and they will be universally believed, for you have put arms into their hands."

"But what can I do now?" cried the mortified Mr. Bineau.

"Nothing very difficult or dangerous," answered Mr. Tassin. "In the next number of the *Observer*, seek to diminish the importance of the occurrence, and I promise you to let the whole weight of the accusation rest on the Misses Carillon's nephew."

"Oh, Mr. Tassin! what a service you render me!"

"Not worth mentioning, Mr. Bineau."

"What can I do for you in return?" asked the grateful Bineau.

"I always knew you to be a talented man, Mr. Registrar, but it was only the other day I became aware of the power with which you wield your pen."

"I am afraid you think too highly of my poor efforts, Mr. Tassin."

"Are you not of opinion, Mr. Bineau, that it might have some local interest if, one of these days, you demonstrated in one of your admirable articles in the *Observer*, the high value of the studies pursued in my College."

"No doubt of it, Mr. Tassin, and I accept the task with pleasure."

In the following number of the *Observer*, appeared the following paragraph from Mr. Bineau's pen:—

"THE CROCODILE ONCE MORE! The Mayor of Laon has applied to the Mayor of Soissons for some information respecting a very clever naturalist, a native of the latter

named place. Art has many still untold resources. It is yet within possibility, that, by some ingenious means, the dismembered crocodile, son of the Nile, may once more be restored to its original wholeness, so as to possess some interest yet for science, and for the curious eyes of our fellow-citizens."

CHAPTER VI.

OCCUPATIONS OF THE CLASSES DURING WINTER—MR. DELTEIL DARES TO ASSERT THAT THE UNIVERSITY MIGHT BE THE BETTER OF SOME REFORMS —WHAT FOLLOWS.

WINTER had now set in; and on none perhaps did its severity fall more heavily than on Mr. Delteil. He had already had to relinquish taking the shorter road to the College by the public walks, for on more than one occasion his appearance had been marked by a royal salute of snow-balls, though by whom or from whence fired he could not see. He looked at the sky above, the ground below, into the street before and into the street behind him, and in vain; Bineau and his associates being hid on the other side of the ramparts. The Professor's instinct, but not his conviction, told him that it must be so; and that his cruel assailants were invisible, and could remain so, increased his natural timidity. He decided then and there, that for the future he would go through the town; but one morning when he unclosed the house door, which opened into the street at the back of the town-hall, he nearly dropped down with fear and amazement.

All egress had been effectually prevented by an enormous mass of closely packed snow. Mr. Delteil hurried to tell the tale to the sisters, who were as much distressed and astonished as himself; Bertha ran round by the ramparts at once to try and find out how such a thing had happened. She returned half-frightened at the evidence which the architectural skill shown in the construction of the frozen wall, gave of its being the result of a preconcerted plan.

It was in fact a barricade as high as the door, formed of stout poles driven into the ground, with laths plaited in and out, together with pieces of old timber, on and round which was heaped an incredible quantity of snow. It might have passed for the work of a Laplander, had there been any one there to see it, who knew anything of Lapland. That it had not been erected in an hour, or by one pair of hands, was obvious at first sight, and Sophy Carillon did not hesitate to say that it was done out of wickedness. Mr. Delteil had his own suspicions, but not the courage to clothe them with words.

The difficulties of reaching his class overcome, the unfortunate Professor was no better off; scarcely was he in his pulpit, before his sense of smell would be tickled by a strong homely perfume—one day it was of fried potatoes, another of roasted apples. Dodin had infected the whole class with his love of cooking, and the classroom stove was now constantly used for preparing these two delicacies. Afraid that the Principal might come

in, and certain that he would not be very tolerant of such smells, Mr. Delteil had the courage to send for the porter, confiscate the roasted apples, and order them to be carried away.

Paterculus (a name bestowed by the Collegians on the porter) proceeded to make a seizure of the batch of baking, with unconcealed satisfaction, as he looked upon it in the light of a flagrant infringement of his patent for barley-sugar and roasted apples. Mr. Delteil paid dearly for this act of courage.

On the morrow there was no possibility of having any fire in the stove. The wood was crackling and singing cheerily in its iron house when the Professor came in; not ten minutes after it was sad and silent, and then a pall of thick black smoke spread all over the room, as trying as onions for the eyes. Mr. Delteil first ordered the door and then the window to be opened; dark threatening masses, like storm-clouds, whirled through both apertures, but still the stove vomited forth column upon column of the stifling vapour.

The boys made loud complaints of the cold, drew their caps down over their eyes, buried their hands in their pockets, and sat listlessly gazing at the whimsical shapes issuing from the stove, the last ever more fantastic than its predecessor. Thus passed all the class hours. Mr. Delteil went home with a purple nose and red eyes. For two days did this smoke continue to pervade Mr. Delteil's class-room; the Professor in great uneasiness

consulted every vane he could see, wondering how soon the wind would change, saying to himself that no doubt any unusually rapid current of air on such a high mountain, gave rise to great disorder in all the chimneys of the town.

The potato-cooking recommenced, and the smoke disappeared. Paterculus was sent for a second time, and a second time by the Professor's command, proceeded to make another seizure; the smoke re-appeared, and that with such fury, the cold, too, with the open window, was so intense, that Bineau had the audacity to propose a game of clap-shoe to Mr. Delteil.

"How dare you, sir!" exclaimed the Professor, really thunderstruck by the boy's impudence.

While many bitter thoughts were crowding on Mr. Delteil, as he tried to think of some fitting punishment for Bineau, a game of clap-shoe had begun, and was going on with great spirit, each boy taking his *vis-à-vis* for a partner, as if it had been a country-dance. The click-clack of the shoes at last made the Professor raise his head.

"Young gentlemen!" he breathlessly exclaimed.

But a party of four were playing, and the noise they made completely overpowered the master's voice.

Two more joined the game; and it was really a curious sight to see the marvellous rapidity with which the twelve legs crossed and re-crossed, and met above and beneath. Every clap of the shoes fell like the stroke of

a hammer on Mr. Delteil's head, and perhaps it was this nervous pain which made him suddenly conceive the mad idea of separating the players.

He came out of his reading-desk, supposing that his mere approach would restore order, but the rhythm of the game acted like the roll of drums in battle; it drove fear from every heart, and made it nearly as dangerous to break into that boyish circle as into a military square. Not only legs and feet were in action, but arms were also in full swing.

Bineau was the most violent of all. His partner was the timid Larmuzeaux, who was almost knocked over every instant by the kicks he received. Lagache and Cucquigny were playing scientifically, striking sparks from the little nails with which prudent shoemakers ornament young gentlemen's shoes.

"Pueri, I withdraw!" exclaimed Mr. Delteil in utter desperation; but he was unable to make his voice heard in such a riot.

The game went on; so he gathered his papers together, and put them, with his pens and ink, into the pockets of his long loose coat. After one more glance at the players, he went out of the room and left them to themselves; but he had scarcely shut the door when he felt uneasy at the step he had taken. Was it consistent with his duty to leave the class alone under any circumstances? Ought he not to have kept his own with the boys? Ought he to go to the Principal, though he

dreaded what his reception might be ?—very likely Mr. Tassin would throw the whole blame on him. Such were the reflections which disturbed the Professor's mind as he strode up and down before the class-room door, without daring to venture in again.

Fortunately, the boys were almost as much afraid of having forced their Professor to go out of the room, as the Professor was of his own exit. The game, therefore, came to a stop, and, after many and many a hesitation, hearing no more of the horrid noise, Mr. Delteil went back to his reading-desk, but with eyes cast down, so afraid was he of meeting the impertinent faces of his pupils.

The smoke had completely vanished during his short absence, and now, for the first time, it dawned on Mr. Delteil's mind that he had been the victim of a trick.

" Young gentlemen," he began, " I have come back to you without seeking the Principal; never again hope to force me to leave the room. Whatever your insolence, or whatever your racket, I shall never again quit my reading-desk. I will not do so, not even if you set fire to it. I might have gone to Mr. Tassin and requested his assistance in restoring order, and punishing the rioters, but I have preferred making you blush for your own conduct. There are several most unruly boys in this class, boys whose delight it is to lead others astray. I know them perfectly now, and I shall make arrangements this very day which shall prevent their having

the power to corrupt the good. The behaviour of those I allude to has been abominable; they have hitherto ridiculed me on account of my lenity. Well, since gentleness has had no effect, let them beware of my anger. It shall not be said that the seventh class is the worst in the whole College—it shall not be said that five of you can hinder all the rest from studying. To-morrow is Thursday—well, Master Bineau shall remain in prison all to-morrow afternoon. I am sorry to be obliged to resort to such extreme measures, but Master Bineau is a very hotbed of discord. It is he who develops all the bad of your natural dispositions."

"It's not my fault if the chimney smoked," said Bineau.

"You bad boy!" exclaimed Mr. Delteil, angrily; "instead of repenting and confessing your fault, you choose to add untruth to treachery."

"But what did make the stove smoke, sir?" asked Bineau.

"Tell me, sir," returned the Professor, "why has it now ceased to smoke?"

"How should I know?" said Bineau; "but I can't stand the cold, and I was forced to warm myself one way or other."

"And you dared to propose to me—to me, your Professor!—to play at clap-shoe—a man of my age and profession to do what is only fit for little blackguards like yourself!"

"But, sir, mamma is always telling me not to catch cold."

"Hold your tongue. I hope the hours you spend in prison may bring you to a better mind, and may improve you. God knows what will become of you, if you continue in your present wicked course. If you would even leave the rest of the class quiet, I would not trouble myself about you; however, I am thankful to say, I have some pupils who love to learn, and are not swayed by your bad example. Look at Charles Marie, gentlemen, he has not once raised his eyes from his book during the whole of this sad disturbance; he has gone on learning his lesson, aware that study is the best preservative against the fascinations of pleasure. Charles Marie shall have fifty good marks for his behaviour during the late uproar, and all those who followed Master Bineau's lead shall, every one of them, have a hundred bad points put against their names."

After having given proof of more courage than he was supposed to possess, Mr. Delteil went away, resolved, that from that time forward, he would pass over nothing, not the most venial fault, and that he would shew the greatest severity towards the rebels.

The next day being Thursday, he sent for Paterculus after morning's school was over, and after having duly notified his intention to the Principal, bade the porter take away Bineau to the condemned cell. The prison was under the stair leading up to the first floor, and

within the room of the sixth class. It had no light but what came through a slit in the door.

"You are not to let Master Bineau out," said Mr. Delteil to Paterculus, "before eight o'clock this evening, not till after the other boys come back from their walk. At four o'clock you will give Master Bineau some dinner."

Paterculus undid the enormous padlock which fastened the door with a great twist, as if the effort almost wrenched his arm off, closing the iron door on the prisoner with a clang that made Bineau burst into a violent fit of tears. Paterculus, in short, acted the fierce jailer to the life. The rest of the class looked on in silence at the rigorous execution of yesterday's sentence. Lagache, indeed, kept his eyes fixed on the padlock, with a look as if he intended to carry away the impression of the lock in his memory. Mr. Delteil, who hoped that such a sight would frighten the other agitators and be a warning to them, dismissed them, double-locking the class-room door.

About two o'clock in the same afternoon, the Professor was busily engaged writing in his own room, when hearing the College band passing the milliner's shop, he suddenly got up and opened the window. Mr. Delteil had no great taste for music, and so slight a cause would not, in general, have disturbed him; but a presentiment of evil made him watch the Collegians as they filed past.

At their head walked the melancholy Larmuzeaux, full of vain regrets for having ever accepted the appointment of drum-major, so out of keeping with his character; behind him came the drummers. The music-master, Mr. Ducrocq, walked next, attracting universal attention by his height, his low-crowned, broad-brimmed hat, and his little clarionet; all at once Mr. Delteil shuddered as if he had seen a ghost; he had descried in the rear-rank of the band little Bineau himself, his one arm pushed through the serpent-like coil of his horn, and giving himself all the airs of an old trooper: at the moment Mr. Delteil beheld him, he was busily engaged in an attempt to walk on the heels of a key-bugler in front of him, who did not keep the step; this manœuvre of Bineau's also answered the purpose of covering the pantaloons of his neighbour with mud.

At first Mr. Delteil was inclined to doubt his own eyes; but any mistake was impossible, for Bineau was distinguished from the rest of the band by his serjeant's stripes,—an honorary distinction bestowed only on the horn-player. The sight of the boy he had left in prison, so miraculously escaped, kept the Professor from returning to his dictionary for at least an hour. He lost himself in an interminable labyrinth of conjectures on the subject, at last resolving that the next day he would insist on a strict inquiry being made as to who had dared to set the culprit at liberty.

When the morning came, however, he had forgotten

both the prisoner and his flight, nor did his resolve of the previous day recur to him, until he saw Bineau standing as impudently as ever in the middle of the class.

"Mr. Tassin ordered me to be set at liberty yesterday, sir," he said. "Mr. Tassin cannot manage without me, and he desires that I may never again be put in prison."

The manner in which Bineau accentuated the last words, made Mr. Delteil feel that he was in no position to continue a struggle in which the Principal had taken part against him. He received this new wrong with patience, shut up his sorrows within the tabernacle of his own heart, sat quietly in his reading-desk, leaving his pupils to their own devices, finding his all of comfort in teaching Charles Marie, who, for five successive weeks, had merited and obtained the best mark for composition. The Professor had not been deaf to some confused murmurs, when on the Saturdays he had read aloud the place in the class assigned to each boy, nor that Charles Marie's name in particular excited the most grumbling.

One day soon after, Mr. Delteil was sent for to the Principal's private room; he went thither with a vague feeling of uneasiness. So alarmed was he at the idea of what he was going to hear, that for every step he took up the stair, he would very fain have gone down two. He found Mr. Tassin wrapped in a large dressing-gown, with a black velvet cap on his head, elaborately and richly worked in gold. The Principal was seated in a morocco

leather arm-chair, as stiff and upright as a minister of state giving audience to some poor petitioner.

" I have to tell you, Professor Delteil," he began in a most unconciliating voice, " that you set a scandalous example in my College—your class resembles none of the others, and I have sent for you to say that this state of things cannot be allowed to go on much longer."

" I have done my best, sir," said Mr. Delteil, " to control my pupils," . . .

" Do not interrupt me, Professor Delteil ; what I have to reproach you with is of so serious a nature, so serious, I repeat, that it is well that very few instances of the kind are ever known to occur in colleges. You try, sir, to shift your faults from your own shoulders to those of the pupils confided to your care ; you seek to throw all the blame on them, while you are yourself the cause of their misconduct. A professor who does not act with common probity, cannot expect to enjoy the respect of his class ; there is among boys a strong sense of justice, which makes them rebel against a master who does not faithfully discharge the duties of his office. Who should set a good example—the young or the old—the master or his pupils ? Well, sir, you have given a bad example, and your class has followed in your steps."

" But, Mr. Principal," . . .

" One moment more, sir, and I will listen to what you have to say ; although facts speak too loudly, in my opinion, to render any exculpation of your conduct pos-

sible. There is a unanimous outcry against the undue partiality you show to one of your pupils; all the others are sacrificed," . . .

"Indeed, Mr. Principal, you have been deceived," . . .

"Yes, I might have been deceived had this accusation been made by one of your colleagues. I might in that case have thought it proceeded from jealousy; but, sir, your extraordinary favouritism is the town-talk. Only the other day, the matter was publicly discussed at a ball given at the town-hall, and a person of some importance, for whose character and advice I have the highest respect, warned me to be on my guard against the continuance of so unwarrantable a system, otherwise I should infallibly lose the confidence and goodwill of the inhabitants of Laon. Yes, sir, this is the way in which the ruin of the very best establishments is often brought about, without the persons at their head detecting the symptoms which foretell their ruin. I repeat, that you have compromised the reputation of my College, by your undue partiality for one of your class; in short, you, placed here as my assistant, have acted as an enemy towards me; Mr. Tanton himself could not have done worse."

"I really do not know how to answer you, Mr. Principal."

"I can easily believe that you are at a loss, sir, though you were so eager to cut me short a few minutes ago."

"You mistake my meaning, sir; I mean that I cannot

defend myself against so vague an accusation; for I am perfectly ignorant who it is I am said to favour."

"Indeed! and what do you say to Master Charles Marie?"

"Charles Marie!" repeated the Professor; "why, what can be laid to his charge?"

"Nothing is said against him in this affair; but the question is, Why did you cause him to be removed from the eighth class?"

"Mr. Principal, you are as well aware as I am, that Master Charles Marie had got beyond the other pupils of the eighth. The Professor of the class was of that opinion also, and you authorized the change yourself."

"Very true, sir; I fell into the trap you had laid for me, without the slightest idea of the reason why you attached such importance to carrying your point."

Mr. Delteil heaved a sigh, and raised his eyes to Heaven in silent appeal.

"To look at you," continued the Principal, "one would never suppose you capable of such cunning; but it won't answer your purpose to put on the airs of a martyr. You pretend to be ignorant of the cause I have to be indignant at you. Well, sir, I will tell you plainly enough. Pray, what made you wish to have Charles Marie in your own class,—what, except to favour him at the expense of his school-fellows? There is but one opinion, I assure you, on this subject, throughout both College and town. A boy who enters the eighth class

without knowing a word of Latin—who makes a jump into the class above almost immediately after—who constantly obtains the first place for themes, versions, memory, and good conduct, is a thing that has never been seen, and is what must be put a stop to."

"Charles Marie has a most extraordinary aptitude."

"Nonsense! that's always the pretext made by those who have no good reason to give. You want to pass off the Misses Carillon's nephew as a prodigy, a ninth wonder, a Pic de la Mirandola, in short; but tell me how it is, that, when taken out of your hands, Master Charles Marie knows nothing; that, when examined by other professors, he has not a word to say for himself; and that Mr. Goudrillas, in the notes he sends in, points him out as a boy of limited capacity. If you can explain this discrepancy, I will own myself wrong."

"Charles Marie, like many other children, Mr. Principal, has a great fear of figures. To many minds arithmetic is unintelligible—the science of numbers is a terror and a puzzle to them, so that the most trifling problem seems an impossibility, a sphinx's riddle."

"Your defence is not a bad one, Professor, and perhaps the mathematical master might take your view of the case, were Charles Marie not a solitary exception to the rest of the class. The child never makes the slightest attempt to do his sums. He comes into the class without anything prepared, while those very same boys whom you accuse of idleness have at least all done their tasks.

I allow that there is a considerable difference of ability among them, but all show a willingness to learn. Your *protégé*, on the contrary, seems a nonentity. If Mr. Goudrillas asks him a question, he looks like an idiot and does not answer. You confess, then, that the great genius you have discovered is utterly devoid of all talent for mathematics ?"

" Yes, sir; and I am another instance of the same want; for never, in the whole course of my life, have I been able to master the simplest combinations of figures."

" By this avowal you pronounce your own condemnation, Mr. Delteil. I have no right to blame you for being ignorant of arithmetic; I am not called on to make you pass an examination; but I am convinced, perfectly convinced, that if you were a good arithmetician, Master Charles Marie's sums would be as admirable as his other compositions. The Professor of the seventh class would solve his favourite's problems, and his favourite would have the best mark for them, as he now has for themes and versions."

" What ! Mr. Principal, do you accuse me of doing Charles Marie's tasks ?"

" Such is the general opinion, Mr. Delteil; and, between ourselves, you must allow that you do not take much trouble to conceal your motives. You lodge in the house of the boy's aunts, persons who have been much talked about" . . .

" Oh, sir !" exclaimed Mr. Delteil, extremely shocked.

"I have been longer in Laon than you, Professor Delteil. Had I been master of the seventh class, I should scarcely have chosen an apartment in the house of women who have given rise to verses."

"A vile and foolish doggrel, with no meaning in it," replied the indignant Professor; "with false quantities, too."

"Very likely; but all I can say is, that a professor, more than any one else, ought to lead a retired and sober life; and it might have looked better, been more in harmony with your age and position, had you chosen a lodging where the mistress of the house was a married woman. Of course you are free to do as you please; I only give my humble opinion. But to return to the matter under discussion: These single ladies' nephew was in the eighth class, and you managed to get him moved into the seventh, your own class. He was a day-boarder, and, by your advice, I understand, he is now only a day-scholar, to facilitate, I suppose, his being always with you. He comes to the class with you, and leaves the class with you. Can you deny that you have given ample cause for the suspicions that exist? As long as the boy is with you, he appears an eaglet; trusted to other hands he is found to be only a poor gosling. Can you deny that rumour has a right to accuse you of being the author of Charles Marie's excellent compositions?"

"I have only one answer to make to all this, Mr.

Principal; I found a talented, industrious child, and I gave him some advice, and occasionally some instruction at home."

"Indeed!" cried Mr. Tassin, cutting Mr. Delteil short; "instruction at home! and yet this is the very same man who refused to give private lessons to the pupils of his class, on the plea, and that to myself, my own very self, (and I suppose you will not deny your words,) of an enormous gigantic undertaking, which had not left him a spare minute during the last fifteen years."

"And I repeat it again, sir."

"And pray, what do you call advice and instruction at home but private lessons? Have you a right to give extra-instruction to only one of your class, to make him an exception, and enable him to surpass all his competitors?"

"I had no wish that Charles Marie should excel his companions; he was very far behind them at first; I tried to put him on a par with the farthest on; his own ability did the rest."

"You know how to shift and turn the question admirably, Professor of the seventh class; but, nevertheless, your conduct has not been honest. In the first place, by what title have you granted to the nephew of the Misses Carillon, milliners, that which you refused to me, head of this College? If I advised you to give private lessons, it was for your own interest, it was to increase your emoluments, and, at the same time, to bring on the

younger classes, who, to say the truth, are very backward."

"Permit me one word, Mr. Principal; what you say as to the private lessons is all very true, and I thank you for the interest you seem to take in me; but since you speak of favouritism, do you not think that private lessons are precisely what may be termed favouritism, since poor parents cannot give the same advantages to their sons as the rich can do? Suppose I have two ignorant pupils in my class, both equally in want of a private tutor, but the one is poor and unable to pay for private lessons, while the other is rich, and can do so if he pleases. You see the chances would not be equal."

"Stop, sir, and let me hear no more of your detestable maxims," bawled Mr. Tassin, in a state of uncontrollable indignation. "I have already shewn too much indulgence in listening for the last hour to your sophistry. The University, in its high wisdom, has authorized private instruction, and how do you dare to set yourself in opposition to the decision of men who did not settle the question without mature consideration? You speak as if you were an enemy of the University, Professor Delteil."

"Oh, sir!" cried poor Mr. Delteil, literally crushed by Mr. Tassin's fluency.

"Positively, one would suppose you were a Jesuit to hear your language."

Mr. Delteil tried to explain.

"Enough upon this subject, sir," said Mr. Tassin, haughtily. "Take your own way, act in opposition to the University, we shall see who will carry the day."

Mr. Delteil, when he left Mr. Tassin's room, felt as if his senses were leaving him. His head was confused and ready to burst; all the blood in his poor little body had rushed up there. He thought it was a mere momentary faintness, so he took the road by the ramparts, hoping that the fresh air blowing on his forehead would calm the intolerable beating of his temples. Charles Marie, Mr. Tassin, the Misses Carillon, his pupils, the College, all were swimming before his eyes. Scarcely able to see, he staggered on, a thick mist gradually covering everything round and about him. When he reached the public washing-houses, situated below the Plain Promenade, the sound of the water falling into the great stone-basins recalled him a little to himself. He had consciousness enough left to grope his way down to the water, take some in the hollow of his hands, and to bathe his face, but as he did so, he fell senseless on a stone bench near.

"Look," cried one of the washerwomen, "that old gentleman seems to have fainted." The women had remarked how the Professor reeled as he came up to one of the fountains. By means of wet cloths round his head, and water unsparingly sprinkled on his face and hands, the washerwomen succeeded in recovering Mr. Delteil from his fainting fit; but he looked whiter than

their linen. Happily, one of them who washed for the Misses Carillon, recognised the Professor, and with the assistance of one of the others managed to get him home. All the way, Mr. Delteil talked wildly, mixing up in an unconnected manner the subjects of his late conversation with Mr. Tassin. He was in a high fever and delirious. In the greatest alarm, Sophy Carillon sent for Mr. Triballet.

"Why did you not come back from College to-day with Mr. Delteil?" asked she of Charles Marie.

"Mr. Tassin sent for him," replied the boy; "I waited a quarter of an hour, and then I supposed he was going to be busy for a long time, so I came away without him."

"What can have happened to him!" exclaimed Sophy, turning the house upside down to find a larger and more comfortable bed than the one in his own room, for the Professor.

Mr. Triballet made a very wry face at being called to attend Mr. Delteil.

"This looks very serious," he said; "it is the beginning of a brain fever—very dangerous, too, he ought to be bled at once; but your Professor is so weak, such a bag of bones, that really I don't see my way very clearly, I don't know what to do."

"Must I send for another doctor then, Mr. Triballet?" asked Sophy.

"You wish to mortify me, Miss Sophy."

"Not at all; but you must save this poor Mr. Delteil, and it seems to me that something ought to be done at once, to prevent the fever from rising higher." Mr. Triballet, on hearing these words, made up his mind and went away home to fetch his lancets.

Sophy, leaning over the sick man, could trace now all the signs of long, severe, and untold suffering and privation, so legibly written on his face; all at once she shuddered, the Professor had stammered out the two last lines of the doggrel.

"Ah, heavens!" she exclaimed, "even he has heard it."

Poor Sophy Carillon had begun to hope that even the inhabitants of Laon, who every day do the same things, repeat the same things, look the same things, might have forgotten, in the course of so many years, that stupid verse; when suddenly it sounds again in her ears, shines before her eyes, as if the words scrawled in white chalk on the green shutters were again before her.

Mr. Delteil went on muttering words quite unintelligible to her; perhaps, thought she, it was only my fancy. How could this Professor, who visits no one, never goes anywhere except to the College, how could he have ever heard such a thing; she then remarked with some surprise that Mr. Delteil often pronounced the name of Charles Marie; on second thoughts, she considered it only natural, from the affection subsisting between the pupil and his master.

She wandered up and down the room with all the rest-

lessness of a person seeking, but without any hope of finding comfort, when a second time, and very distinctly, the sick man said, " Not a husband will see."

There was no longer any doubt—Sophy's legs trembled under her, a cloud passed before her eyes, she thought she was going to faint, but the recollection of the Professor's dangerous state gave her courage to struggle against a fit of hysterics ; she lay back in an arm-chair, her hands stiffened, but she conquered her weakness.

How could he have heard it ?—who could have told him ? she asked herself over and over again, without the least hope of penetrating the mystery. Then came another question to the full as distressing. Had Charles Marie been told as well as the Professor ?—did his schoolfellows laugh at him for being the nephew of three poor old maids, who had been made the laughing-stock of Laon ? Children are always so cruel in their jokes, though she, and no doubt Mr. Delteil and her nephew, had often heard her and her sisters jeered at.

Then another idea came into her mind,—people when delirious have generally one particular fancy ; suppose Mr. Delteil were to repeat that verse again and again, there would be an end to all hope of concealing it from Bertha, Mr. Triballet, and, above all, from Charles Marie, who might still be ignorant of it. She wished, oh ! so much, that he might never know of the ridicule attached to his aunts. She foresaw all the difficulty there would

be in preventing Bertha and the boy from coming into the sick-room; so, as soon as she saw Mr. Triballet she said,—

"Doctor, I must beg you to tell my sisters that their coming in and out of Mr. Delteil's room may do him a great deal of harm. I see he must be kept very quiet, and besides, we don't know yet whether the fever may not turn out to be infectious."

"Well; but how is he to be nursed then?"

"You forget me—I mean to nurse him," replied Sophy.

"But the sitting up at nights?"

"I can do that also."

"Come, come, Miss Sophy, no nonsense—your health is so very strong as it is, isn't it? that you are able for any fatigue—and remember, it is not one, or even two nights that I am talking of, but ten nights."

"Very well, be it so,—I shall be able for it."

"What devotion for a little old fellow, who most probably will not live to know anything about it; I more than doubt, I tell you, that he will ever get out of that bed again."

"You don't really think so?" said Sophy.

"He is *such* a mere lath of a man! He has no stamina; and how do you think he is to struggle through a fever like this?"

"Speak lower, Doctor. Suppose he were to hear you?"

" Don't have any fears on that score. He won't hear anything for more than a week to come, I promise you ; his head is otherwise occupied at present. But what is your reason for not allowing your sisters to help you— that's what I want to come at?"

" Because," said Sophy, and then stopped.

" Well, because of what?" asked the astonished Mr. Triballet.

" Nothing," said Sophy.

" This is either mere childish obstinacy, Miss, or else you are hiding something from me," said the Doctor, who had pulled a great pair of scissors out of his case of instruments, and was lopping away at his hair as usual.

" I think it right to nurse Mr. Delteil myself," replied Sophy to this direct attack, " because he will be better taken care of. Caroline is indolent and out of spirits, and would sit at the bedside and forget any one was in the bed ; and, as for Bertha, she is too lively and noisy. It would be impossible for her to remain quiet even in a sick-room."

" What is that the learned gentleman is saying?" asked Mr. Triballet, stopping his hair-cutting, and letting the scissors fall.

Sophy rose and placed herself between the Doctor and the patient. " Don't listen to him," said she with a shiver ; for Mr. Delteil was repeating the four lines from beginning to end.

After a short silence the Doctor said,—" It is very

strange what is going on here. Don't listen!" continued he, repeating Sophy's words, and staring at her with his round eyes—rounder than ever at that moment; "then there *is* a mystery, is there?"

Sophy made no reply.

"Now, do you listen to me, Miss Sophy," said the Doctor, with a very deep sigh. "You are not frank with me; you are concealing something from me which I have a right to know."

"Oh, as for any right!" said Sophy, impatiently; "don't ask me any questions—you only irritate me."

"Yes—as your medical man I have a right to know. How do you think I can cure your professor, if you keep the cause of his illness secret?"

"Doctor," returned Sophy, "I believe you to be a good man, and I believe you are quite right in what you now say. Hitherto you have never shown any good-will towards this poor Mr. Delteil, but promise me now to cure him."

"I can only promise to do my best."

"Good heavens! then you really think him in danger. Is his recovery impossible?"

"Not quite impossible, perhaps. The malady is not yet fully developed, and I cannot tell which turn it may take. All that I can say is, that I will do my best to combat it. Can I say more?"

"Give me your hand, Doctor,—you are a really good man,—and I will now tell you what you have so long

sought to find out. Do you remember the day you were first called in to attend me ?"

" Certainly.—Though I have got somewhat used to them now, those attacks of yours gave me great pain at first."

" I have shown no confidence in you, Doctor. I ought long ago to have told you what caused those fits of mine. One morning, on opening the shop, I saw written on the shutters, with white chalk,—

> ' Here live fair sisters three,
> Who—all Laon do dread—
> Of suitors three hundred
> Not one husband will see.'

Was it not cowardly to ridicule three women who were trying to gain their livelihood honestly, and who never did harm to any one ?"

" Poor child ! poor Miss Sophy ! Do you mean to say those silly lines did you so much harm ?"

" Oh, Doctor ! so unprotected as we were, they entered like sharp steel into my inmost soul."

" But why ?" said the Doctor, extremely puzzled by this excessive sensitiveness. " But why ? It was a joke, a stupid joke, and could do you no harm, particularly as I have heard you say over and over again that you never meant to marry."

" O no—I never shall marry," said Sophy, mournfully.

" I could never have supposed that your nervous attacks had such an origin."

"From that or anything else," said Sophy, a little hurt by Mr. Triballet's manner, "what does it signify? The evil done is the same; it cannot be cured, but it may be borne."

"But still, my good young lady, you have not told me what those lines have to do with Mr. Delteil's illness?"

"And yet it is not very difficult to see. Mr. Delteil, in his delirium, keeps on repeating those very lines."

"Well, and what then? He has heard them somewhere in the town," said the Doctor.

"They are still remembered and repeated, are they?" asked Sophy, in a sad voice.

"No, no—very seldom," answered the Doctor, who, too late, perceived the blunder he had made.

"There are so many people, you know, who having nothing else to do, love to rake up all the scandal they can find out, of their neighbours; but that is over now, I scarcely ever hear any one speak of that old story, never, indeed. And so you are fretting yourself to death because the Professor has heard the verse, or the lines, or whatever you call them?"

"Not exactly because he has heard them, but they must have made a great impression on Mr. Delteil's mind since he says them over and over again."

"You should not lay much stress on that; dreams, nightmares, and delirium, are all much about the same thing; in illness, people continually rave of things they

care least about, they even, often, talk on subjects of which they never thought before."

"Is this really true, Mr. Triballet ?"

"Quite so."

"Now you can understand why I do not wish my sisters to come into the room. Bertha has never heard those lines, and it is as well she should remain ignorant of them, is it not ? As to Caroline, who can tell if her melancholy does not arise from this sad remembrance ?"

"In your place I know what I should do," said Mr. Triballet, "and your Professor's recovery would be all the more sure, he would be better taken care of, and have better medical advice."

"Well, tell me what you mean."

"Send him to the hospital," returned the Doctor.

"Oh ! Doctor Triballet," exclaimed Sophy in a tone of severe reproach.

"Ah, well ! you take fright at the name like the rest of the world, but if I were ill, I would rather go to the hospital than die in state at home."

"Better taken care of !" said Sophy, really annoyed ; "you don't know me, Doctor, I will do the same by Mr. Delteil as if I were his mother ; and just answer me, would it be right and proper that one of the Professors of the College should be sent to the hospital ?"

"Greater men than he ever was, or will be, have been sent there, and were none the worse for it, I believe."

"It doesn't matter, I won't hear that horrid place

named again, Doctor—I beg you will not. Now tell me, will you honestly try to save this poor man?"

"As I would yourself, Miss Sophy."

"Thank you, and believe that I shall be eternally grateful to you."

CHAPTER VII.

A PROVINCIAL BARYTONE—MR. DELTEIL'S GREEK DICTIONARY—CAROLINE.

It is the custom in Laon during the winter, to promenade, in the afternoon, in Borough Place, and as far as St. Julian's Well at the end of St. John Street. The walk is not long, but has its importance.

It might be likened to the Palais-Royal at the same hour, could a grain of sand give any idea of the bulk of a rock. Within this confined space are situated the finest shops in Laon ; grouped around are a library, an ironmonger, an apothecary, two milliners, a saddler, two grocers, besides a ready-made clothing establishment, and some hosiers and mercers. No private dwellings are to be found in this business quarter of the town, excepting that of the Marcillet family, which, with its wide façade and steep roof crowning three stories, looks higher than the Cathedral there, where almost all the other houses are built so low.

Vaux Street, in which the Misses Carillon lived, cannot boast of the stir and movement of Borough Place, though

the table-d'hôte of the Griffin Hotel, facing the milliners' shop, brings many travellers there, as well as some of the bachelors of Laon. Caroline Carillon had remarked, among others, a young man who always took his dinner at the Griffin, and who as regularly cast glances in at the window in which figured the doll with the blue eyes, and the humbler cap-blocks. These glances were the origin of that melancholy of the second Miss Carillon, so distressing to Sophy the eldest, and much, indeed, Caroline wondered who the unknown could be.

Mr. Jannois (such was his name) had, immediately on his coming to Laon as post-office clerk, become quite the rage. His admirable singing was the talk of every drawing-room. The foundation of his fame was laid by the Mesdames Marcillet, (the youngest of whom was the wife of the Barrister Marcillet,) for, thanks to his exquisite attire, Mr. Jannois had at once been invited to these ladies' evening parties. His dress was copied by all the young men of Laon, who discerned in everything he put on the true Parisian cut, though the truth was, all he wore came out of a tailor's shop in Soissons, the town where Mr. Jannois had spent the six preceding months as an inspector of the post-office.

Rarely was the colour of this gentleman's money to be seen; for more than two-thirds of his salary went in extra finery, such as embroidered shirts, ruffles, and frills, and gloves, scents, and perfumery in general. Mr. Jannois' creditors, in all good faith, believed that his

faulty payments were a natural consequence of the artistic qualities which lent him such *éclat* in the provincial circles by which he was so courted. The post-office clerk, with his barytone voice, his carefully arranged beard, olive complexion, long face, and Parisian manners, had really something of the appearance of a hero of romance. He turned a compliment with a grace and a dash of sentimentality quite unknown to the country-town dandies.

It was not easy to reconcile his air of distinction with the petty place of a clerk in the post-office; the fact was, that Mr. Jannois had once had other prospects. Brought up in Paris, at the Conservatoire, he had, for a short period, dreamed a dream of running the splendid career of a great opera-singer, but he was ruthlessly awakened by a clear-sighted professor, who distinctly told him that a merely agreeable voice and a tolerable style led to nothing.

Indeed, the singers in Paris who receive nightly applause, have generally worn out two pair of lungs before acquiring their celebrity, so that the public only learns to appreciate and admire them when they are on the decline. The Conservatoire professor, who did not discover in his pupil the strength of mind or voice for a ten years' struggle, endeavoured to give him an insight into the life of bitter disappointment he was so anxious to plunge into.

"You laugh," he said, "at Ponchard, who now bleats

out ballads in our Paris drawing-rooms, but Ponchard gained his reputation by singing, and good singing. He trades now, and makes money upon the strength of a renown of which Paris will never lose the recollection as long as Ponchard lives. Pretty much in proportion to the energy of your efforts to make yourself a name among your contemporaries, will be the sharpness of your rival's teeth in attacking it.

"Believe me, every man celebrated in Paris, with some very rare exceptions, has become so by incredible labour; and it is equally true, that against such labour, firm as a rock of granite, waves of malignity, violent criticism or defamation, break in vain. But you, Mr. Jannois, have not in you that which insures success; at the end of a year, on the boards of a theatre—and a reputation is not made in a year—you would be more ridiculous at thirty-five, than Ponchard at sixty."

The pupil had not sufficient good sense to understand the value of this sound advice; he left the Conservatoire, and for two years kept himself from starving by singing at concerts, got up by mediocrities similar to himself. He obtained some success, it is true, but due principally to a quite irreproachable toilette, whatever might be the deficiencies concealed; but still his pockets were empty, and he had to resort to an almost incredible expenditure of stratagems, to avoid any expenditure of cash.

But at last gaunt-eyed want appeared, that terrible Parisian misery, known as well to those of real as to

those of fancied talent, and also to clerks of the Monts de Piété. Jannois then began to think of trying some other way of life, and thought himself rescued from destruction when he at last got the place of a supernumerary clerk in a country post-office.

He had to spend ten years in the provinces before he succeeded in obtaining a situation worth sixty pounds a year; experience had never taught him prudence—so that in every town in which he had been employed, he left hosts of recollections behind him; first, with his creditors, who, in the bitterness of their hearts, revenged themselves by seizing on the tenth awarded by law for debts; and, secondly, with amateurs of both sexes, who united in deploring the loss to the country of such a first-rate talent.

Mr. Jannois, whose voice and manners always gained him admittance among the provincial nobility, and who in many places had had a knife and fork laid for him at some aristocratic tables, at least twice a week, was furious at finding himself insulated on the mountain of Vaux, and in such a wretched inaccessible hole, as he disdainfully termed Laon.

Though flatteringly received in the Barrister Marcillet's house, on account of his voice and costume, he left it disgusted and angry with the empty talk, the petty gossip, the narrow ways of the inmates. Without being a first-rate musician himself, Jannois had lived sufficiently among musicians to know what value to place on

Miss Marcillet's bad execution on a bad piano. Unrelenting ennui took possession of him till the day he caught a glimpse of Caroline Carillon through the shop windows.

From that time, under pretext of smoking a cigar, he always remained behind in the dining-room of the Griffin, after all the habitual diners at the table-d'hôte had gone away. At last, one day Mr. Jannois summoned up courage to enter the Misses Carillon's shop. It was on that afternoon when Sophy and Bertha went to the Promenade St. Just, and after Mr. Triballet had left with the news of Caroline's partiality for Mr. Delteil.

Caroline blushed extremely at the sight of this unexpected customer, and answered quite at cross-purposes, when the post-office clerk inquired if she had a particular song. The selling any music would have been so miraculous, that not only did the sisters avoid procuring any of the modern compositions, but they had come to the determination of parting with the stock they already possessed. Caroline took down from a shelf a tolerably thick parcel of yellow-looking songs, none of a newer date than ten years before, but that was not what Mr. Jannois was caring about. While pretending to turn over the sad-coloured ballads, he paid Caroline the prettiest compliments with so bewitching a Parisian accent, that it seemed to her as if she were listening to a fine air with variations, executed by the first of instrumentalists.

The post-office clerk talked to her, too, in a half-confidential way, of the sad and solitary life he led in Laon, not sparing warm colours in his description, intermingling here and there an adroit flattery of herself, while his eyes and whole attitude bespoke a dejected, despairing state of mind, then quite a fashionable condition.

Mr. Jannois asked and obtained permission to come occasionally after his dinner, to be refreshed by a little congenial conversation; he managed very quickly to make Caroline feel an absorbing interest in his fictitious woes; she took them really to heart, and suffered accordingly, and hence the depression of spirits about which her sister and Mr. Triballet were demurring.

Caroline had too upright a nature not to blame herself for receiving any visits when her sisters were both out; she was often on the point of confessing the fact, but vague fears of being blamed by Sophy held her back.

Mr. Delteil's illness came to complicate the situation—it was far more difficult now to speak of her being acquainted with Mr. Jannois, of whose name and existence her sisters were totally unconscious, than it would have been on the occasion of his first visit. She now began to reap the first-fruits of deceit—for as Sophy and Bertha now never went to take their afternoon's walk on the Promenade St. Just, the eldest being occupied in the sick-room, and Bertha remaining in the shop, it was necessary to intimate to Mr. Jannois that he must stay away. Very unhappy and ashamed was

Caroline to make a private sign to him, even though it was only a shake of the head, when he appeared as usual at the shop-door. She was cruelly humiliated. This was the predominant sentiment for the first day or two of the Professor's sickness; then came an intolerable anxiety to explain her conduct to Mr. Jannois, until, working herself up to the idea that it was a duty she owed him, not to leave him in unpleasant doubt, she determined to seek some opportunity of meeting him.

Chance favoured her—for having been sent to fetch some medicines, she met Mr. Jannois himself on his road to the hotel. At first she was afraid to avail herself of the very chance she had been so longing for, without answering or even appearing to hear Mr. Jannois' expressions of pleasure, the trembling Caroline at last managed to say that they had a sick lodger in the house—and that she believed Mr. Jannois had better never come any more—she hoped (this in a very low voice) he would forget her.

But Mr. Jannois would not hear of any such thing, and went on to speak in a most touching manner of his misfortunes, and of how much more bitter his isolation would be, if now, after having shed some sunshine on his path, she withdrew her cheering influence.

"But what can I do?" said the distressed girl.

"Do you never walk on the ramparts?" asked Jannois. "Could you not sometimes meet me there before breakfast?"

"Oh no, indeed!" answered Caroline; "it would be so very wrong; I cannot deceive Sophy any more."

"Then I will come this afternoon to the shop," said the young man in a very decided tone.

"You must not; pray don't; leave me time to tell my sisters; pray do; promise me you won't come."

"I will not, if you give me your word to be on the ramparts between nine and ten o'clock to-morrow morning."

"Very well, I promise," said Caroline, reluctantly.

When Caroline re-entered the shop, she turned away from Bertha, for she knew that her face was as red as fire, and she was afraid of her sister remarking it.

"How long you have been!" exclaimed Bertha.

Caroline entangled herself in all sorts of excuses, saying, "That she had heard a report while she was out, of a village in the neighbouring valley being on fire, and that she had gone, with many more, to the ramparts to see if it were really so." And to avoid being questioned any further she began humming a song and setting things to rights at the further end of the shop.

Without intending any mischief, Bertha said, "You are very lively this morning, Caroline, is it on account of the fire?"

Caroline was at a loss for a moment.

"You are very silly, Bertha; do you think the sight of a burning farm is likely to give me pleasure? No, the air has done me good; it has made my blood circulate."

"I should think so," replied Bertha, "it's sharp enough."

"I like this weather," said Caroline.

"How odd you are!" returned the younger; "you would not walk with us during the autumn, you were always shut up in the house, and now, when it snows and freezes, you find the weather quite to your taste."

"You like heat," answered Caroline, drily; "I suppose I have a right to prefer cold."

This little quarrel increased Caroline's discomfort; she shrunk from adding untruth to untruth at every word she spoke; luckily, Mr. Triballet coming down stairs after having passed hours at Mr. Delteil's bed-side, put an end to the conversation.

"Well, how is he?" asked Bertha.

"Still a good deal of fever and delirium; but I think he will soon be better. Young ladies, I wish you good morning; I must run away, for Mrs. Marcillet, the younger, is expecting me."

The Doctor made his exit with precipitation; he was quite unable to talk with any one but Sophy, who always seemed to put words in his mouth, while with her two younger sisters he was never at his ease.

The next day Charles Marie came home from College with a very woe-begone face. In consequence of his dear old Professor's illness, he had remained away from the class for two days, and during this time an assistant Professor had dictated a subject for composition; not

having the dictation, Charles Marie could not give in any theme, and was, therefore, put down at the foot of the list, to the great satisfaction of his school-fellows.

Mr. Tassin, by chance, coming into the class-room, glanced at the great chart hung up by the Professor's reading-desk, and on which the boys' places in the class were marked. He said with a smile :—

"Ha ! Master Charles Marie is at the bottom, I declare ! That is very extraordinary ; he is in general at the top, I believe. It is easy to see that Mr. Delteil is not here."

The boys, encouraged by the head master's example, began to laugh loudly. Charles Marie, much mortified, tried to explain that his not having been present at the dictation was the cause of his not having done any theme.

"Very well imagined, my boy," said Mr. Tassin, "but, probably, you absented yourself on purpose the day of dictation so as to have a good excuse. . . . What business, pray, had you with Mr. Delteil ? Are you his doctor or apothecary ?"

Again the whole class burst out laughing. Charles Marie replied that his aunt had kept him at home those two days.

"Ah ! my young friend," said the Principal, contemptuously, "you have lost a master who was extremely devoted to you, and who would have made a learned

man of you. Tell me now, there's a good boy, did your tasks cost you much trouble to do ?"

Charles Marie did not dare to look up, he knew himself to be surrounded by unkind faces; the tears rushed into his eyes, but by a prodigious effort he restrained them from overflowing.

"Never mind," continued Mr. Tassin, "when Mr. Delteil recovers you will be more fortunate in your compositions, won't you ? You will be at the top of the class again, you know."

Big tears dropped one by one on the poor child's writing paper.

"You must not cry for so little," went on the Principal. "Look here, Charles Marie, if you wish me to believe that you did your own themes without the Professor's help, tell me what does nine times nine make ?"

This was a coarse way of exposing the poor boy's ignorance to the seventh class, for Charles Marie had a horror of the multiplication table; he made no answer. A voice on his right whispered to him to say sixty-three, another on his left muttered thirty-seven—common tactics among school-boys, who wish to confuse one of their companions while they appear to be assisting him.

"And eight times eight ?" asked Mr. Tassin.

The boys went on whispering all sorts of wrong answers, and the Principal to go gradually down the Pythagorean table until he reached the derisive—"And one and one; do you know how much that makes ?'

Charles Marie could stand this humiliation no longer; he burst into a violent fit of tears.

"Well, my little man," said Mr. Tassin, "all I can say is, that if you wish to have a prize for arithmetic, you must work very hard; Mr. Delteil will have enough to do to teach you."

Charles Marie's despair went to Sophy's heart, the more so as he seldom gave way to tears;—had he been beaten? what was it that had happened? but to her thousand questions he answered nothing.

At last she asked for the week's College Report, and, on seeing that he was at the bottom of the class for composition, she supposed that his child's self-love had been wounded. As, however, Charles Marie firmly refused to attend the classes until Mr. Delteil should be well again, his aunt made up her mind that doubtless the assistant professor must have been very rough to him. She would have gone herself to seek some explanation from Mr. Tassin, had not Mr. Delteil still required all her care.

As the fever decreased so did the delirium, until at last one morning the old Professor, on opening his eyes, was startled by the sight of the eldest of the sisters dozing in an old easy chair close to his bedside. He thought himself the sport of a dream. He tried to rise, but fell back again on his pillow, the noise he made awakening Sophy, who exclaimed,—"Ah! then you are better at last!"

"Have I been ill, Miss?"

"You have been unconscious, Mr. Delteil, for fifteen long days."

"Fifteen days!" repeated he; "then what has become of my dictionary?"

"Dictionary! what dictionary?" asked Sophy.

"I am terribly behind my time," observed Mr. Delteil; then he added, "Let me look at my papers, my dear lady, will you?"

Sophy went to the bureau, on which a heap of manuscript was lying.—"Do you mean this?" she asked.

"Yes, yes!" exclaimed the Professor, in a joyous accent.

Sophy took up the papers carefully, and carried them to the sick man. She then undrew the window-curtains, and let the sun shine into the room.

"Oh, what a lovely day!" cried the Professor; "what a pleasant thing life is!" And he began touching the old papers, reading over the crabbed definitions of crabbed Greek words with an emotion, and caressing the ugly scrawls as if they had been dear friends long unseen.

"Forgive me, Miss Sophy, I am forgetting you. You must think me very ungrateful, don't you? Will you allow me to shake hands with you?"

It was only when his hand lay near the milliner's that he perceived how emaciated his own was. Sophy guessed his thoughts.

"In another week," she said, "you will be quite

another man. To-day you must begin to eat; are you not very hungry? We must take care what we are about, however. I will ask Mr. Triballet's leave, and then I will make you some chicken-broth. You must make haste and get well."

The overpowering gratitude that swelled the poor Professor's heart, took from him all possibility of speech. He had lived alone for thirty years, and knew nothing of the attentive care and tenderness only to be found in the bosom of a family. Shut up, ever since he had entered on the arduous profession of a teacher, in poor lodgings, too timid to seek the acquaintance even of the persons in whose house he lodged, Mr. Delteil had at last come to believe that life consisted in making a great dictionary. His manuscripts were his children; beyond them he never dreamed that the world had any interest to offer. His taciturnity, and the shabbiness of his appearance, and of everything about him, were not calculated to excite sympathy. His superiors overlooked him, his fellow-professors blushed to own him, and his inferiors and children turned him into ridicule.

Mr. Delteil had come to a perfect understanding of the poor part he played in society. This was a matter of indifference to him, and if a painful thought did now and then intrude, he drove it away again by more earnest study. He owed to his convalescence the knowledge that such a thing as friendship existed. The Sister of Charity who dresses the soldiers' wounds, the workman

who risks his own life to save some unhappy drowning wretch, were far surpassed, in Mr. Delteil's eyes, by the milliner, Sophy Carillon, who, to him, appeared an angel strayed from Heaven. Then only he understood all that woman could be, of which previously he had never had a suspicion.

At nearly fifty, the Professor discovered a new world, where the air was purer, the sky more serene, the trees greener, and men better. This paradise he believed to be entirely created by Sophy; he did not know that returning health had much to do with these new-born feelings of happiness. One morning, on first awaking, Mr. Delteil caught himself humming a little old song, probably learned from his nurse; he jumped out of bed, and ran to look in the glass, to make sure that those *tira, dira-las,* really were issuing from his own lips.

He opened the window and looked out; it was a clear dry morning, the roads all glistening with hoar-frost. Following with his eye the different undulations of the mountain of Vaux, it rested on the bright slate-covered brick houses of the suburb, that attest the wealth of the cultivators of the soil. At the bottom of the mountain the red-brick grange Levêque recalled to his memory the tradition of a bishop, who was flung from the top of the citadel in a barrel lined with nails.

In other circumstances, Mr. Delteil might have been tempted to compare his situation to that of the supposed martyr; but he forgot his past sufferings in a lingering

gaze at the long line of the mountain of Chambry, with its fringe of poplars vanishing into the horizon.

Sophy surprised the Professor in a state of ecstasy. "What! are you up already, Mr. Delteil? You are very imprudent, and without having had anything to eat. You will catch cold."

"I assure you I feel very well," said the Professor.

"So much the better; but still," said Sophy, taking a little printed woollen scarf from her neck, "you had better twist this round your throat."

Mr. Delteil said "No," but allowed himself to be wrapped up like a child.

"I got up this morning," continued Sophy, "with an idea that I should find you well; and so I have made you some beef-tea, and Bertha is going to bring it up to you directly."

"How can I ever be grateful enough to you, Miss?" cried Mr. Delteil.

"If you don't wish to make me angry," replied Sophy, "you will never talk in this way. I do nothing but what I ought. How cold you must be in that thin coat? Wait a moment," added she; "there is an old dressing-gown down stairs, that one of our lodgers left when he went away. It is not very handsome, but it is warmer than your coat."

In the twinkling of an eye Sophy was back again with the dressing-gown and some wood, accompanied by Bertha carrying the beef-tea. Mr. Delteil would have

given ten years of his life to kiss the hem of the milliner's dress.

When he found himself seated by a sparkling fire, almost lost in the folds of the comfortable wadded dressing-gown, with a cushion at his back, placed in the easy chair by Sophy herself, and his little table before him, Mr. Delteil was not sure that he was not in a dream.

"Miss!" he exclaimed.

"Do you wish for anything, sir?" asked Sophy, turning round.

"I want to hear the sound of your voice, Miss."

The old Professor felt as if all his old ideas and recollections had vanished; his brain appeared to him to have grown young again, and ready to receive new impressions.

"I must send to the College to-day to let them know you are better," began Sophy.

"Ah, yes! the College!" murmured Mr. Delteil, who suddenly recollected that he was a Professor. "And how is our little Charles Marie?"

"He has been at home all the time you were ill, but he has not been idle, I assure you; he is always reading the books you were so good as to borrow for him from the public library."

The crocodile, Mr. Tassin, the doggrel lines, all flashed back into Mr. Delteil's mind, the wrinkles of whose face suddenly deepened.

"What is the matter?" asked Sophy, noticing the change.

"Ah, Miss! why am I forced to leave you, who have been kinder to me than any one ever was before?"

"Leave me!" exclaimed the milliner.

"Yes, Miss, leave you, and Laon, and the College! No doubt I shall be sent elsewhere after what has passed between Mr. Tassin and me."

"Is it possible? but surely nothing is decided on yet?"

Mr. Delteil's answer was a deep sigh.

"Oh, no! you must not go away," continued Sophy; "you are not half well yet; you think you can walk, but I am sure you will need, at least, another fortnight of absolute rest. Besides, I can't let you go."

"Can't you?" said Mr. Delteil, gazing at the milliner's somewhat anxious face; "but, you know, my going or staying does not entirely depend on me."

"Are you not comfortable with us, Mr. Delteil?"

"Oh, Miss! how can you put such a question to me?"

"First of all, Charles Marie cannot do without you. I know I should never persuade him to attend the classes again unless you were there."

"But, Miss, next year Charles Marie will be moved into the sixth, and then we shall be forced to separate."

"That's true; but still he would be with you when at home, and you could give him advice; and then he loves you so much; and why shouldn't you be promoted

also? I don't understand about these things, but I fancy you are by far the cleverest man in the College—cleverer than Mr. Tassin himself."

"I have never asked to be raised to an upper class," said Mr. Delteil; "so I have probably been overlooked or forgotten."

"Somehow or other I fancied that might be the case," replied Sophy; "but you are wrong; you should not keep so much in the shade; you ought to busy yourself and make interest; and if you ask, I am certain you will be made Master of the sixth class; and then you know Charles Marie will be still with you."

"This never occurred to me before," remarked Mr. Delteil; "and perhaps you are right, Miss. I will follow your advice—I will do my best—I will write to the Rector of the University, and send in my certificates" . . .

Sophy spent many hours of the day with the old Professor, helping him to weave golden dreams for the future. When she went back to the shop she found Bertha alone.

"Where is Caroline?" asked she.

"She is gone out," answered Bertha.

"And where to?"

"I don't know," replied Bertha.

Sophy then recollected, that several times during Mr. Delteil's illness she had observed that Caroline was often away all the morning.

"Does she often go out?" she again inquired.

"Every day early," answered the younger sister.

"It is very strange!" thought Sophy; but she made no further observations.

The next morning, by mere accident, when she took Mr. Delteil his breakfast, she walked to the window, and, looking out, she saw Caroline gliding under the archway by the side of the Griffin Hotel. At first she did not pay much attention to this, until all at once she recollected that Bertha had said Caroline went out regularly every day, and at the same hour; then a suspicion arose in Sophy's mind that it was not perhaps to enjoy her reveries that her second sister was so punctual in her walks.

The next day Miss Carillon lingered in a most unusual manner over the early breakfast-table, not without being quite aware that Caroline was extremely annoyed by the delay. Her every movement betrayed an almost uncontrollable impatience, as she went backwards and forwards to the shop, looking worried and irritated.

"Caroline, will you be so kind as to go to the washerwoman, and ask why she has not sent home the linen?" said Sophy at last. "Really, since Mr. Delteil's illness, you do nothing; and I don't know how the house would go on if I did not look after it."

Caroline's face had cleared immediately on hearing this request. Answering "Yes," and, without hearing the end of the phrase, she tied on her bonnet without

looking at herself in the glass, and ran off. The eldest sister did not appear to notice this haste, but went quietly into the shop, leaving Bertha to put away the breakfast things.

Caroline had not gone ten steps down the street before she crossed over, turned back, and dashed under the old gateway, taking the road to the ramparts.

Sophy, who had not been blind to all these evolutions, noiselessly opened the shop-door, and followed in the same direction; but the two minutes Caroline had in advance, sufficed to enable her to distance Miss Carillon so completely, that when Sophy reached the ramparts she knew not whether to turn to the right or the left.

After dinner on this day of Miss Carillon's unsuccessful reconnoitring, Caroline, who had sat all the time without uttering a word, suddenly complained of a bad headache, and, saying she must try and forget it in sleep, went up to her own room; but Sophy remained down stairs, having at length overcome Mr. Delteil's scruples, and brought him to consent to take his meals, at least for the present, with her and her sisters.

The good milliner had made a shrewd guess at the Professor's wretched dinners; she had fathomed his immense self-imposed privations; but she managed with so much delicacy, that he believed his secret safe.

"You are accustomed to eat at restaurants?" said she. "Well, the very best of them are bad for sick people, the dishes are too rich and heating; and what

you require now is plain family cooking, at least for another two months. I know that always soup, and beef, and vegetables, is not very inviting, but when you are strong again you can go back to your restaurant."

Mr. Delteil, who for so long had lived on bread and chocolate, considered these three dishes as profusion. He was inclined to exclaim, "You offer me a dinner fit for a prince!" and if he restrained himself, it was not from false shame, but from that sentiment which had impelled him from the beginning to hide the misery of his existence. Had he replied, "I never spend more than sixpence a day on my food," he knew beforehand the question that would naturally have followed, "But why do you starve yourself in that manner?" and then he must have entered into so many details. He must have related his whole life, his hopes, and his labours, and perhaps after all not be understood. Would he not be considered crazy if he confessed that, with the exception of his sixpence a day, and the amount of his rent, he spent the whole of his Professor's salary in printing one single copy of his dictionary? Could any woman, for instance, understand the absorbing interest of this Herculean labour, when the friends of his youth, those who, when he was twenty, had been twenty also, had looked upon his darling project as the height of madness? Had not the printer himself laughed at the proposition of printing a single copy? Any avowal

involved, indeed, a history of minutiæ, to which few persons can ever have a key.

For one thing, Mr. Delteil wrote abominably. His manuscript was full of erasures, intercalations, cancellings, re-cancellings, the pen drawn through half lines, whole lines, omissions, and words over words, until the most erudite and patient among interpreters of hieroglyphics would have shrunk back appalled. Mr. Delteil's Greek writing looked exactly as if some fly had fallen into an ink-bottle, and then in a state of delirium crawled over the paper.

Fully aware of his want of caligraphic talent, Mr. Delteil, who cherished the idea that he was about to raise a monument of science, could think of no better plan, than by means of the printer, to render his manuscript legible—he should thus at least have a readable copy of his work; the expense of setting the types being at all times enormous, naturally the printing of a book in a foreign language is still more costly. One printed copy of a manuscript comes to as much as a book of which a certain number are thrown off by the press. This was the sieve of the Danaides, into which Mr. Delteil every month threw the greater part of his emoluments.

The old *savant* had made a vow to himself never to mention to any living soul his arduous voluntarily undertaken task; and he had lived on in this way for thirty years, very often labouring for a week over the definition of a single word.

His illness revealed to him another world, and in this unknown world his great discovery was Sophy Carillon. With returning memory came the recollection of the contemptuous manner in which Mr. Tassin had spoken of the three sisters, and Mr. Delteil, who had never been an observer before, all at once became a close scrutinizer. In Sophy's face he found traces of an atrophy of the heart; a malady to which the most highly endowed in provincial towns frequently fall victims. The indications were slight, easier, perhaps, to lay hold of in the whole than in the details of the physiognomy.

A smooth forehead now and then ruffled by wavy lines; a dreamy look as if at something unseen by others; a head unconsciously bent; such were the traits by which the eldest Miss Carillon might be described. The bitter trials of life had given her a beauty of its kind, but not one, probably, to be understood elsewhere than in Paris. For she had never been considered handsome by any among whom she lived, and it was even common to hear one or other of the enlightened citizens of Laon, whose own egotism had brutalized his face, turn into ridicule Miss Carillon, whose fine moral qualities had etherealized hers.

Mr. Delteil's observations were carried on during his convalescence; the assiduous attendance, and the almost maternal care of which the milliner was so prodigal to him, did more in one fortnight to open his eyes than the whole of the last year. Constantly engrossed by his

can object to. All I mean to say is, that your concealing the doing so pains me very much."

"I suppose there was no occasion to make an affair of state of a walk on the ramparts with a friend."

"Ah! my dear sister," said Sophy, "if I distress you by speaking on this subject, forgive me; and do be frank with me, who love you so dearly."

"Well then, if you must know everything, I walk out with Mr. Jannois, because I am engaged to be married to him."

"Then why don't you introduce him to us?" said Sophy; "I should never think of interfering with your choice, unless there was some very serious reason for doing so. I have often seen you sad, and had you spoken to me I might have been able to comfort you."

"I cannot receive Mr. Jannois here," replied Caroline; "if we were to be married immediately it would be different, but" . . .

"Ah, Caroline! take care what you are about."

"But you won't let me finish my sentence—we are afraid of our engagement getting wind, and Adolphe's parents would never consent to his marrying before he had a good and permanent place—and they might insist on his breaking off with me."

After a pause, in which Sophy seemed painfully agitated, she said, "You may remember my being sent, more than ten years ago, to Malines, to learn lace-making and embroidery; one of my companions there became

acquainted with the foreman of the shop in which we worked, and they were shortly after privately married. The young girl believed a similar story to the one you now tell me, and did not even confide in her own mother. A private marriage unluckily was possible where she was, she had her papers with her, and the young man, also a Frenchman, had his. To make a long story short, they were married; their intention was to work hard and save every penny they could, to take a shop of their own, and then confess their marriage, with the certainty of being forgiven. Well, Caroline, before the young wife's first child was born, her husband had left her—entirely abandoned her."

"But what has this to do with me?" asked Caroline; "because one man behaves ill, it does not follow that all men must and will do the same."

"The story makes no impression on you; but when I tell you that the unhappy young girl was your own sister—myself." Sophy burst into tears.

Caroline, extremely touched, seized her sister's hands, exclaiming, "Ah, my poor sister!"

"Now, do you understand?" cried Sophy, sobbing, "Charles Marie is my son—my unowned child" . . .

"But why?" asked Caroline.

"Too late I wrote a confession to my mother; she came to me at once—forgave me, poor mother, because I was so young and so far from her—she comforted me, and said I should return home to her with my baby. It

was all arranged so nicely, we went to get my certificate of marriage. I had seen my husband sign his name in a book; I had written my name below his:—all in vain, Caroline; when we went to look over the register, the whole leaf of that day's marriages was missing. But the curé remembered my being married, and gave me a paper saying so; however, the legal proof was gone—then my mother took fright, and advised me to keep the whole thing secret; she was afraid of the scandal of Laon, afraid it might injure you and Bertha—so one unhappy day she left me, taking my baby with her; she put him to nurse at Vervins, giving out he was the child of our brother, then at Marseilles, and who shortly after going to Algiers and dying there, the probability was the truth would never be known. Ah, Caroline! may you never know the pain and grief of not being able to acknowledge your own child—of never hearing him call you mother; and then came those horrid verses, they seemed written on purpose for me—'and never a husband will see,'" muttered the unhappy woman, with an hysterical laugh.

"And what became of your husband?" asked Caroline, quite subdued.

"Some years after he publicly married another woman—I had no courage to interfere—my mother was dead, and we had no friends; he died," she added in a lower voice, "just a twelvemonth ago, in Paris."

"But Adolphe, Mr. Jannois, I mean, would never act in such a way; if you knew him as I do, you would

see how good and noble he is—he is not like other men."

"Ah! I thought and believed the same of the man I married," said poor Sophy.

"But you would see that I am right, if you only once were well acquainted with him; he is an artist—a musician I mean, and you can't think how he suffers in his present situation, which his parents forced him to take."

"What is he?" asked Sophy.

"He is in the post-office," answered Caroline; "but he cannot bear the every-day routine of a clerk's life; it weighs him down; you can see it in his face; he is almost broken-hearted, and if it had not been for me, I really believe he would have been driven to some desperate act."

"Well, then, why not make me acquainted with him? I will tell you sincerely what I think of him; you can scarcely be a good judge," added Sophy, with a faint smile. "Come, when will you bring him here?"

"I wanted to give you a surprise," said Caroline. "Adolphe is to sing at a great concert that is to be given very soon in the theatre. I had planned that we should go, and then I intended to make you remark him, and to hear your unbiassed opinion; but now that you know everything, I am afraid you will be prejudiced against him. However, I still should like you to hear him sing before you talk to him; his being always melancholy, perhaps, won't prepossess you in his favour, but when

you hear every one in the theatre applauding him, you will own I have not been mistaken in my choice."

"I will do as you like," said Sophy. "What I wish is to see you happier than I have been myself, and that was why I tried to get at your secret."

"You are very good, Sophy, and you have no idea what a comfort it is to me to think that I have told you everything; at all events I can talk about him now. I need not always be doing things under-hand. I was beginning to live altogether with my own thoughts: I was always trying to bring his figure and face before me. He is dark, you know, with such fine moustaches; and he is by far the most distinguished-looking man I ever saw. He dresses, too, so well—if you had ever met him in the streets you could not have helped remarking him. Only imagine, too, he has entirely given up society for me; he used to visit the younger Madame Marcillet; he always thought her coquettish and full of pretension; well, since he has known me, he has given up going to her house altogether. And he really is good, I assure you; indeed, if he had not been what he is, I should never have thought of him; but the very first look decided my fate. When I see other young men, even those who are said to be so well brought up and so superior, they seem quite mean to me by his side. He might have made an excellent marriage at Soissons, if he had liked, and lately, very lately, a widow, still young, who knew him at Soissons, came over here and stopped

at the Boar's Head. She chose rooms exactly opposite the Post, and sits all day at the window to see him in his office. He takes no notice of this lady, because he really and truly loves me."

"And how you love him!" said Sophy, with a sigh.

"Yes, and he deserves it," answered Caroline, proudly.

"No doubt he does," said Sophy; "but do not tell Bertha anything of this; you were right, after all, in not bringing him to the house. Don't let Bertha hear anything about the matter. If she can pass through life without knowing what such violent feelings are, she will be all the happier."

"Oh!" said Caroline, "let what will come, I can never be unhappy again."

"My dear Caroline, one does not fear the storm when the sky is clear; the stronger the affection the more sad sometimes are the recollections it leaves."

CHAPTER VIII.

GRAND MILITARY SYMPHONY—LARMUZEAUX'S MISFORTUNES—THE UNPOETICAL WIFE.

Mr. Tassin, who night and day thought of little else than how to astonish the inhabitants of Laon, awoke one morning big with the idea of getting up a military excursion on a large scale, the end and aim of which was to make a parade of his pupils. After a study of the county map, he fixed on the little town of Coucy-le-Chateau as the goal of this expedition, and forthwith issued a proclamation to his pupils by which he made known his plan, and decreed that they were to hold themselves in readiness, and in full uniform, on the Thursday following, at six o'clock in the morning.

Carts were to be prepared for the transport of provisions, and to convey those among the youngest and weakest of the Collegians unable for the fatigues of such a long march.

Through the good offices of Mr. Bineau, notice of this impending College fête was given in the newspaper, with a promise of a copious account of its solemnities from the

flowing pen of the Registrar himself. The Principal asked and obtained the Mayor's permission for the drummers belonging to the College "to beat to arms" through the town at five o'clock on Thursday morning. In consequence of this military note of preparation, half the peaceful inhabitants of Laon were afoot as if some interesting passage of troops were about to occur.

The streets were crowded with many most respectable and respected citizens, carrying great baskets stuffed with sausages, pies, ham, roasted pigeons, and cold meats of various kinds, enough to have fed a small army taking the field. Even the mothers of the Collegians had left their beds to be present at the departure of their sons; some natural tears were privately shed by the parents, happy and sad at one and the same time; happy to see their children setting off gaily on a march of three leagues, sad to think of the absence of a whole day to be endured. The Collegians, with faces scarcely to be seen under their great cocked hats, put on all sorts of martial airs, caring very little why, so they did escape a day's school, and excited by the idea of seeing something new.

Mr. Tassin, to end all these varying emotions, made a signal to Mr. Ducrocq, and immediately the trumpet's shrill clarion echoed joyously through the streets of Laon, and the Collegians marched along, marking the step by loud stamps on the pavement, in the charitable hope of rousing any who might yet be sleeping. It might have been imagined that many and painful family

separations were imminent, so endless were the paternal exhortations; so closely did fathers and mothers keep to their sons' sides, only resigning themselves to part from them when the mimic regiment reached the town-gates. A long line of carts followed, and the rumbling of the wheels might have led any one to suppose that a train of artillery was passing.

Divers villages were startled out of the depths of slumber, and more than one peasant opened his window, thrusting out a terrified face, half afraid that there was going to be a new inroad of Cossacks. Mr. Tassin had strenuously recommended to Mr. Ducrocq not to fail, on entering every village, to play a certain double-quick-step march, to the accompaniment of drums beating an alarm. This march, with its formidable loudness and rapidity, produced the anticipated effect everywhere, except in the village of Anizy, reached by the "excursionists" at eight o'clock.

The peasants, mostly assembled in the great square, had rushed to the conclusion that a new revolution had broken out, just as the drum-major appeared passing through the old entrance-gate of the village, flourishing his cane to give the signal for the quick step.

"Good patience!" cried an old peasant woman; "why, sure, that must be Dame Larmuzeaux's boy?"

"Ah! by my faith, and so it is," answered another.

"Are you quite certain?" cried one, putting on his spectacles.

"I say, Larmuzeaux!"

"Cousin Larmuzeaux, I say!"

But the drum-major kept his eyes on the ground, wishing with all his heart that his enormous bear-skin cap would fall down and bury him. Anizy was his native village, but he had never reflected on the effect his extraordinary accoutrement would probably produce there, until he was in the act of passing through the gate. In spite of Mr. Tassin's endeavours to preserve order in his ranks, the peasants persisted in pressing forward to decide whether it was or was not the Larmuzeaux they knew, loudly debating the matter among themselves all the while.

"How grand our cousin is grown! he fancies himself a gentleman born!"

"He won't own us now."

"We must go and tell his mother he is here—she doesn't look down upon us."

The unfortunate drum-major was just thinking of throwing away his big cap, his great epaulettes, and his high hat, when a stout vigorous woman rushed forward, and threw her arms round his neck.

"What! is it really you, Tom?"

"Yes, mother," cried Larmuzeaux.

As the drum-major was thus forcibly stopped, the other drummers followed the example, and the battalion forgetting all discipline, broke its ranks.

"Eh! young fellow!" cried the farmer-woman, "I

can't say you look very handsome dressed up this way. What have you got such a hat on for—are you going to stand in the fields to scare away the sparrows ?"

Larmuzeaux, who in a moment of enthusiasm had ordered from a tailor a complete drum-major's equipment, had not, however, thought fit to inform his mother of his whim.

" Why don't you speak, child, instead of standing there as if you were deaf and dumb ?"

The other peasants, affronted at not having been acknowledged by their cousin, as they called Larmuzeaux, now took their revenge by loud bursts of mocking laughter.

" Madam !" ejaculated Mr. Tassin, hoping to bring back Larmuzeaux's mother to a sense of what was due to him.

" Ah ! you are the master, are you ?" cried Mrs. Larmuzeaux, facing round upon the Principal ; " this dress, I suppose, is made after your fancy ? thank you kindly, sir . . . Do you mean that my son should pull out teeth at fairs ?"

" I beg, madam," interrupted the Principal, in a lofty manner . . .

" Yes, I saw one just like him," pointing to the drum-major, " last market-day at Rheims, in the great square ; he would have made the fellow of Thomas. . . . Come, come, I won't have my son made a tom-fool of, so please to take off that harlequin finery this very mi-

nute; can't you see that every one is laughing at you?"

And in truth it was a trying moment for the drum-major, for his school-fellows had joined the circle of peasants gathered round him, and were heartily uniting in the chorus of jeers and laughter raised at his expense; at last Larmuzeaux's courage gave way, and he fell to crying.

"Upon my word," cried his mother, "I should have done better to keep you at home. Did one ever see the like? You are like a buffoon—come, off with that hat!"

"Put on your undress cap," said the Principal to the drum-major. Larmuzeaux pulled out of his pocket a cap with a gold tassel, which more than once had served as a target.

"Ah, well! you look something more like a Christian now," exclaimed the dame. "But, at the same time, sir, since you are the master," and she turned to Mr. Tassin, "I can't see what good it can do you to plaster Thomas's coat all over with gold."

"It was his own doing, madam—there has been no force in the matter."

"So it was your own fancy, Tom, was it?—why, you must be losing your wits, child. Gracious me! if your father had been alive he would never have owned you for his son in that bedizenment! But I'll never believe, no, never," added Dame Larmuzeaux, turning again angrily to Mr. Tassin, "that my Tom all of him-

self would have thought of getting such a coat as that; no, you or some one else must have put it into his head."

"My good woman, I repeat your son gave his own orders to the tailor."

"It was you then, Tom; and I am to pay for all this gold and silver—Heaven have mercy on me!"

Mr. Tassin had turned away to escape the furious looks of the angry dame, who, shaking Tom violently, exclaimed, "I'll teach you to order gold and silver, I will. Ah! indeed, I am to work as hard as a horse, and all that my fine gentleman of a son should dress himself up like a powdered lacquey. But I am not going to pay for any such nonsense; and so, sir," following Mr. Tassin, "you may pay the tailor's bill yourself; I'll honestly give you back your gold lace, and that on the spot; you can put it on some of the others you know; or make fiddle-strings of it for what I care—that's your business, not mine; but I'll be hanged if ever I pay one penny of it!"

"Madam," answered the Principal, "this is not the most fitting moment for settling such matters" . . .

"Don't tell me, I know what I'm about; you must be mad yourself to dress up my son like a monkey in a fair, all just to make people look at you—for we country people can see farther into a millstone than townsfolk—you can't throw dust into my eyes, I can tell you. Why isn't Thomas dressed like the rest of your fine Collegians, though they all look pretty much like

merry-andrews in those ridiculous caps? It might do very well under the Republic, but" . . .

"Madam, when you placed your son under my care, you were perfectly aware that the rules of the College required that all the scholars should wear a uniform."

"I don't deny that,—but why is my son different from the rest of them?"

"Madam, I have already had the honour to tell you that all these extras were ordered by your son himself."

"I'll settle the business presently with Thomas; but, in the first place, sir, he goes no further—I shall keep him at home to-day."

"I am very sorry, madam, that I cannot yield to your wishes."

"You may march away now as soon as you please," replied the dame, coolly. "Don't be afraid, I'll send Tom back to you to-night; I have paid you his board in advance, you know, or I promise you he should stay at the farm for the future."

"As you please, madam."

"But I am not pleased, sir," cried the widowed dame, snatching the silver-topped cane out of her son's one hand, and throwing the bear-skin cap he held in the other, on the ground; "there, the master may do what he likes with them. And now, march off, my fine fellows," said she, dragging Larmuzeaux away towards her house.

pushed down the loosened stones, widening the time-made breaches; others cut their names with knives upon the wall; while a party, headed by the usher, went to fetch provisions from the town for the boarders. When the drums beat for dinner, you might have fancied you saw a camp in a town taken by assault.

The most important result of this expedition was the newspaper article written by Mr. Bineau, who had evidently worked himself up into a flaming ecstasy of antiquarianism. His pen no longer traced words, but symbols; he evoked the shades of the departed Lords de Coucy, something of whose history he had picked up from one of the little books sold at fairs, and which contains the famous Lament of Gabrielle de Vergy, while eating the heart of her lover. A medley of commonplace notions, of narrow professional ideas, jumbled together with archæological ravings, produced a paper such as most country lawyers are guilty of at least once in their lives. The article ended thus:—"Honour to the Principal of our College—honour to Mr. Tassin, who develops the intelligence of our youth by bringing them acquainted with the great barons of feudalism. Such teaching, combined with that of the dead languages, sows in ductile minds precious seeds of recollection, which later are an ornament to memory, which develop the judgment, which appeal to the sense of sight, and which lead a man in his maturer years to dwell with pleasure on such imperishable remembrances, which cer-

tainly speak more forcibly than books of the strength and might of those valorous lords-paramount—beings of another epoch, beings of another temper—proud in war, tender in love, and whose portraits we cannot gaze at in the library of Laon without asking ourselves if our race has not degenerated, and if those paintings are not fabulous resemblances?"

This article, which took up four columns, consisted only of four sentences; its misty pomposity obtained great applause in the drawing-room of Madame Marcillet the younger, at that moment greatly interested about a concert to be given in the theatre, and of which all the town was talking. A concert with Marcillet was synonymous to three months of diplomatic negotiations, which generally pursued the following course:—First, there was a deputation from the Corporation, to beg her to sing for the benefit of the poor. She answered by making all sorts of difficulties; she did not know what to sing; then the agitation consequent on singing in public always knocked her up; there was nothing new to be had even in Paris; the modern operas were all detestable; in short, she acted a scene, in which, after the amount of pressing she considered her due, she promised to do her best. The second act consisted in making the pianist, who was to accompany her, come at least a hundred times to her house to rehearse with her; and then at last, the very day of the concert, it always happened that she was ill and could not sing.

It was by such manœuvres that she had managed to gain the reputation of having "the finest voice in the department." But just now Madame Marcillet was extremely out of sorts: she had heard that a great concert was in contemplation, such a one as had never before been given in Laon. Mr. Ducrocq, the Professor of Music in the College, had the management of it; the wonders that were to compose the programme were already whispered about; and the barrister's wife had been evidently forgotten.

The fact was, that Mr. Ducrocq, having made strict inquiries not only as to the number of musicians to be found in the town, but also respecting the exact amount of talent that each possessed, and their peculiarities, had most resolutely struck off the list the names of whimsical amateurs, finding plenty to do in training unpractised players to keep together, without the addition of those with more pretension than ability. The following persons had had a pen drawn through their names:—A man who played the serpent in St. Martin's Church, and who had doubts whether holding the office he did ought not to prevent his appearing in a theatre; a town-councillor, a performer on the violin, who refused to sit at the same music-desk with a dancing-master; a bassoon, who pretended that his chest required the greatest care, and so never sounded a note; a horn-player, who, with the help of his six pieces for altering the key of his instrument, always took with him six

friends wherever he went; and a flutist, who never took a part in concerted pieces but on the condition of executing two solos with variations.

Mr. Ducrocq's threats became known all over the town, and produced more effect than an ukas of the Emperor of Russia. If some, who were in the secret, talked of a prodigious symphony, sprung from the brain of the Director of the College band, others mourned over the fate of the rejected amateurs. In answer to this, it was said that Mr. Ducrocq had plenty of musicians at his disposal, and did not need any supernumerary help; that for the choruses he was to employ the pupils belonging to the Normal School, the Cathedral choristers, the band of the National Guard, the small remains of the Philharmonic Society, and the brass instruments of the College.

While a thousand reports were flying about Laon, Mr. Ducrocq was hard at work night and day at his great symphony, which originated, in truth, with Mr. Tassin. Soon after the publication of Mr. Bineau's enthusiastically antiquarian paper, the Principal said to his Professor of music:—

"Could not some musical composition be consecrated to the memory of that beautiful excursion? The ruins . . . a storm among the ruins . . . the Lords de Coucy . . . I think something might be made of it."

"No doubt, sir, but you are talking of nothing less than a symphony—the most difficult composition in the

world, and, besides, I should need a poet broken in to this sort of work."

"A poet!" cried Mr. Tassin; "very well, I have got just what you want. Come and dine with me to-day, and we will talk the matter over at our leisure."

The consequence of these preliminaries was a dinner, at which the Registrar was made acquainted with the Professor of music. Mr. Bineau entered most eagerly into the Principal's idea, and, thanks to Mr. Ducrocq, who had had opportunities in Paris of seeing how such things were put together, the Registrar was made to understand how he was to compose the poetry for the symphony. It was settled that the military expedition of the College should be supposed to arrive at Coucy on the day of the fair. The ale-houses were to be full of peasants drinking and laughing; on the village green a man selling ballads was to be reciting to the country people of the surrounding hamlets Gabrielle de Vergy's lament; the boys were to ask the young girls to dance, while the children were to run to and fro with whistles and rattles; on a sudden the men in the public-houses were to fall to fighting and quarrelling, throwing bottles at each other's heads; a thunder-storm was to bring the village dances and the symphony to a close.

This was the fine arrangement proposed by Mr. Tassin, Mr. Bineau, and Mr. Ducrocq, which they discussed unceasingly from six in the evening to eleven o'clock at night. After endless *pros* and *cons*, each went to his

bed with his imagination on fire; one dreaming of his music, the other of his verses, and the third of the lustre so splendid a performance must shed upon the College.

Dating from that dinner, Mr. Bineau became subject to an author's fits of absence of mind, and the business of his office was grievously neglected. The subjects discussed in prefectures are not those that usually generate poetical ideas; but the Registrar arranged matters very cleverly, by leaving all official transactions to his head-clerk, so as to be sure of finishing his poem,—fruit of many a sleepless night, within the necessary time.

Mrs. Bineau thought her husband sadly changed, and told him so; she had small hope of any good arising from this mighty undertaking; she was worried to death by his startling way of rushing in and out of the house; of his eternal soliloquies; of his search after rhymes, and of the lullabies he was constantly humming to try and make his verses flow, to say nothing of his starts and jabbering in his sleep.

Mr. Bineau had once been a careful, neat man; now he went out with his hat unbrushed, and several times forgot the umbrella which hitherto had seemed a part of himself. He was perpetually complaining of fatigue, perpetually striking his forehead as if to show what hard work it was to compose.

The persons whom he visited frequently, and who

were the chosen confidants of his labours and his anxieties, thought it their duty to warn Mrs. Bineau to look after her husband, as otherwise this poem would be the death of him. As for Mr. Ducrocq, though the task he had on hand was no child's play, it seemed to make no difference in his daily habits, and he received the little notes Mr. Bineau was sending him at all hours of the day very coolly. The Registrar could not compose two lines without forwarding them to the musician with this question,—

"How do you like my verses?"

"Very well," was the verbal answer returned by Mr. Ducrocq, who hated writing.

Often, at six o'clock in the morning, Mr. Bineau, whose eyes had been open some time before, meditated on the calm slumber of his wife, waiting impatiently for her awaking that he might consult her on the poetic inspirations of the past night.

"You really are tiresome, Mr. Bineau!" exclaimed the lady, out of all patience with the versifying mania that had taken possession of her husband.

"And you are just like all women, my dear," said the Registrar; "well, I'll go to Mr. Ducrocq."

"You don't mean at this hour, Mr. Bineau?"

"And why not? He is always waiting for my verses, and yet I send him no less than five or six every day. What a labour it is! I wonder why I ever had anything to do with it."

"Why indeed!" exclaimed the wife; "I am sure you were in no way called upon to do so."

"It's clear you don't understand what I am about," retorted the irritated author; "you don't seem to understand the glory that awaits me! Mr. Tassin was saying so only the other day, never has such a performance, music and poetry, been seen in the department. Won't you be pleased to see my name mentioned and praised in the next annuary? Is Louis gone?"

"He is not up yet," answered Mrs. Bineau.

"He goes too late to school; however, I want to know if the band have begun to rehearse their part of the Symphony."

"Well, go and wake him if you like, Mr. Bineau."

The Registrar, without waiting to dress himself entirely, ran up stairs, and putting his night-capped head into the boy's room, heard his son snoring with all his might.

"Louis!" shouted the Registrar, approaching the bed, "you lazy fellow,—get up!"

Louis opened a pair of imploring eyes, and then shut them again directly.

"Is the music being rehearsed?"

"What music?" exclaimed little Bineau, rolling himself up into a ball, and turning his back to his father.

"What music!" repeated the indignant Mr. Bineau; "why, you monkey, what else can I mean but the Symphony?"

Little Bineau's answer was a snore. The irritated Registrar took hold of his son and gave him a good shaking, dragging down the bed-clothes, that the cold of the morning might rouse up the little sluggard.

"I am going to get up, papa," said the boy, stretching out one arm.

"Well, mind you come and speak to me before you go out."

Having seen his son actually out of bed, Mr. Bineau desiring him not to be long dressing, went away; but no sooner had his father closed the door than little Bineau jumped into bed again, covering himself up with a sort of rapture, and snoring louder than ever. At the end of a quarter of an hour the Registrar called from below, "Louis!"

The sleeper answered,—"Yes, papa, directly," and then turned on the other side and fell asleep again. Twenty minutes after, Mr. Bineau shouted, "Louis, I don't hear you moving."

Little Bineau put one arm out of bed, caught up his shoes, and tapped them on the floor to make believe he was running about in a great hurry, and then after this perfidious demonstration, closed his sleepy eyes once more.

"It is very odd," remarked Mr. Bineau to Mrs. Bineau, "five minutes ago I heard Louis walking about, and now I don't hear any one stirring over head. I wonder if he is gone! What do you think?"

Mrs. Bineau had also gone to sleep again, and did not answer.

"My dear!" cried the Registrar, "are you asleep?"

"Yes," replied she.

"Do answer me, at least; I don't hear Louis moving."

"Well, go up to his room."

The Registrar was horror-struck by the cunning trick his son had played him; he saw it at once; for Louis was in a deep sleep, holding a shoe still in one hand, the undeniable witness of his guilt.

"So this is the way you go to school!" exclaimed the father; "wait a moment, and you shall have a nice cold shower-bath in your bed."

Louis, caught in the fact, jumped out of bed, and complained of a very bad headache.

"I'll make you know what a headache is presently," said Mr. Bineau; "I shan't leave the room again till I see you dressed." Grumbling all the while he put on his clothes, little Bineau at last vouchsafed to tell his troubled parent that the rehearsals of the famous Symphony had not yet begun.

"Not yet begun!" repeated the Registrar, in a tone of despair, "then I must see Mr. Ducrocq at once; he is always hurrying me, and saying I keep him back, and after all it is he who is behindhand."

All that day Mr. Bineau did nothing but inveigh against his musical colleague; twice he sent his office-boy to him, who twice came back in great perturbation,

not daring to repeat to his master the oaths with which Mr. Ducrocq received him; the poor boy, who thought to get out of the scrape by saying that he could not find Mr. Ducrocq, was ready to drop when the Registrar declared he would go himself and find him, and make him give an answer into the bargain. On leaving his office, he took the turning leading to the College, and there, sure enough, he met Mr. Ducrocq moving most majestically along the street, a violin-case in one hand, and an enormous packet of music in the other.

"Mr. Bineau, you go too fast, you are in too great a hurry," exclaimed Mr. Ducrocq, "really you almost drive me wild. Where is your poem?—is it finished?"

"Oh! to-day I have not been able to write even one line," replied the Registrar.

"Then, Mr. Bineau, all I can say is, we shall never be ready in time."

"What do you mean, Mr. Ducrocq, have I not given you fifty verses already?"

"Fifty verses! what are fifty verses! I want the whole. I must study the poem from beginning to end, or else I shall not be able to compose anything worth listening to."

"I beg you to believe, Mr. Ducrocq, that verses can't be had by the dozen, just for the asking."

"And music! do you think that is easier? Last night I composed the drinking-song and chorus for the peasants, and I am now on my way to make the pupils of the Normal School go over the score with me."

" Then I shall not leave you, Mr. Ducrocq ; at last I shall hear my own verses . . . they must sound very well, don't they ?"

" If I had only had the Storm, and the dispersion of the young men and girls, I should have had all the music finished," was the musician's answer.

" Come, this news really gives me courage," cried Bineau. " I only ask two days more, and that is not too much for a Storm, is it ?"

" Very well, then it is quite settled, and I may reckon on the Storm the day after to-morrow."

The poet and the musician went together to the Normal School, where they found waiting for them the performer on the serpent, from the Cathedral, who also initiated the embryo schoolmasters into the mysteries of the Gregorian chant. The number of pupils who had any notion of music was extremely limited. The lesson, therefore, seemed very long to Mr. Bineau, who was all impatience to hear his verses sung. While Mr. Ducrocq was making the singers sol-fa each part of the chorus separately, the Director of the Normal School entered, bowed to Mr. Bineau, and took him aside.

" I have been told, sir, that you are the author of the verses my pupils are requested to sing. I congratulate you, sir, on your fine poetic talent ; but, sir, I am sorry to add, that I cannot take upon myself the responsibility of allowing the young people under my care to play the part of drunkards ; it would be a very unbecoming thing

in those who are being educated for public teachers. My pupils live here exactly as if they were in a cloister, they scarcely ever go without the walls from year's end to year's end. They are destined in after life to fulfil a very difficult mission, that of carrying the torch of civilisation into our provinces. Now, I put it to yourself, sir, whether it would be proper to let these young people represent the vices of gaming and drunkenness; be supposed to be quarrelling and breaking glasses in a public-house."

Mr. Bineau was petrified, and could find nothing better to say than that the subject had been approved of by the Principal of the College.

"I make no doubt of it, sir," said the Director of the Normal School, "but the course of instruction in Colleges is very different from that pursued in our schools. What appears a trifle to others, assumes gigantic proportions with us; however, the matter does not rest with me, for I sent your verses to the School-committee of Revision, and we must await its decision. But I thought it my duty to let you know what I had done."

Mr. Bineau now began to have a perception of the difficulties of the trade, and he spent the rest of the afternoon in running from house to house of the different members of the Committee of Revision, to deprecate any clipping of the wings of his muse. It was eight o'clock in the evening before he got home, and he found his

wife in a state of high irritation. It was the first time in his married life that he had ever been too late for dinner, and now the dishes, kept hot for the last three hours, were as dry as chips.

If the thought of the fame and glory almost within his grasp, had not endowed Mr. Bineau with supernatural courage, he would now and for ever have given up writing the poem for the Grand Symphony; and when, in addition, he remembered that he had promised the Storm-chorus for the day after to-morrow, his uneasiness amounted to distraction. To keep his engagement, he must renounce all sleep for the following two nights, and devote them to a furious and obstinate poetical travail. When Mrs. Bineau was about to retire to rest, she saw her husband sitting with his head buried in his two hands, and beating the floor with his foot, as if he expected to get verses out of it.

"Are you not thinking of going to bed, Mr. Bineau?" asked the lady, stopping to watch him.

"I shall not go to bed at all to-night," said he.

"I suppose you want to bring on a fit of illness, Bineau, don't you? Haven't you work enough in your office, without passing your nights in making nonsensical verses? And what good will it ever do you, I should like to know?"

"Let me alone, can't you!" exclaimed Mr. Bineau in a passion; "you will make me lose the thread of my ideas."

Mrs. Bineau went to bed, and went to sleep. She was in a deep, calm slumber, when she was startled by a singular noise, and, opening her affrighted eyes, she beheld her husband, even Mr. Bineau, making the most extraordinary grimaces with his mouth, from which issued the most extraordinary noises;—the poet was in fact mimicking a storm.

"What's the matter with you, Bineau?" she screamed.

But Mr. Bineau did not hear her. He was too busy making thunder, occasionally stopping to exclaim, "Fly, fly, let us fly!" accompanying the words with a doleful, sinister, whistling sound. All at once he jumped up and began rushing about the room, crying, "Fly, fly, let us fly!" looking like a maniac, with his hair all on end. He had gone round the room several times, when he was suddenly seized by an apparition in white. He uttered a real shriek of terror.

"Goodness, gracious me! Bineau, don't you know me?" said the bewildered Mrs. Bineau, who had jumped out of bed, and pursued her husband under the impression that he had gone out of his mind.

"What business have you here, madam?" cried the excited Registrar.

"Why, for goodness sake, what's the matter with you? It's all that abominable scribbling that has turned your brain—I'll put an end to it;" and, without more ado, she set fire to the loose sheets of written paper scattered over the desk.

"What have you done, woman?" exclaimed the unhappy poet, in dire consternation.

"You will please to come to bed this minute, Mr. Bineau," cried the matron. "I am not going to let you be at these tricks again, do you hear? You really frightened me. I did not know you a bit when your horrid noises awoke me. It seemed to me that it was not a man I beheld, but a barking monster! You call that poetry, Mr. Bineau? Just you take care that I never catch you at it at night again. Goodness me! why, your face is all of a twist still, from the state you put yourself in."

As the lady had tight hold of her husband's hand, he could not help himself. He was obliged to give up the point and go to bed.

"Now that you are quiet, Mr. Bineau, I wish you would tell me what put into your head to howl like a mad dog, and to bellow out *boumm! boumm! proutt!* enough to shake the house down."

"My dear, you can't understand anything of these matters."

"So much the better, I should think; for I declare to goodness, the people shut up in the asylum at Charenton go on exactly that way."

"Ah, my dear! for all that, it is inspiration."

"Ha, ha! and so you imagine yourself inspired? Nothing will serve your turn now, won't it, but being inspired? Well, do you hear, I don't choose you to be

inspired, at least not here—not in my room. Keep your inspirations for out-of-doors. I can't help what you are out of my sight, but you had better keep out of the Prefect's sight also, for he might not like your inspirations any better than I do, and he might dismiss you. A pretty fellow you are to talk of being inspired! Mr. Bineau, forsooth, has his moments of inspiration now, and acts a tragedy part all night—lucky, too, if the neighbours haven't heard his ranting—and then when he is asked why he does all this, he doesn't know what to say. You are ashamed of yourself, I hope—you have lost your tongue.—Ah! if I had only known what I know now, I would never have married you—no, never. A man with inspirations! it's enough to make a cat laugh! Come, speak, can't you? At least, try and say something for yourself—confess that you were not in your right senses—promise that you will never do so again. After all, it wouldn't so much matter if you had your inspirations only at home, but just suppose you were to be taken with them in the open street at mid-day, what do you think people would say? Oh me! unfortunate woman that I am—you will break my heart."

Mrs. Bineau's tears had more effect on her irritated husband than her anger. Mr. Bineau, who had pretended to be asleep to avoid answering his wife's various questions and cross-examinations, now woke up, and being really fond of her, he did his best to pacify and soothe

her, and at last succeeded in making his peace. Next morning, happy news came to indemnify him for the domestic vexations his devotion to poetry had brought upon him. The Committee of Revision had decided that the pupils of the Normal School might sing the drinking-chorus in the Symphony without detriment to the purity of their education.

Mr. Bineau, as might be imagined, did not miss the rehearsal, in which, for the first time, the words were to be set to the music, and sung; but here, again, he was disappointed, for the singers, accompanied by six serpents, played by their school-fellows, did not allow one syllable of the poetry to be heard. All of them, sons of peasants, stout, young, and gifted with obstreperous voices, faithfully followed Mr. Ducrocq's instructions, that is, to halloo and bawl like drunken men.

"Why, not one word will be heard, if they go on in this way!" exclaimed the Registrar.

"Ah! it does not much matter whether the words are heard in this part or not," said Mr. Ducrocq.

"Yes, but I insist on my verses not being thrown away in this stupid manner, after all the trouble I have had."

"But they won't be lost, Mr. Bineau, for you know it is settled that your poem shall be printed and sold at the concert, so that every one may understand what is meant by the Symphony."

"But that is no reason why the singers should not try to pronounce distinctly."

"They are a set of perfect savages," said the leader of the orchestra; "I am sure I wish they would say the words plainer, but it's of no use speaking to them; their heads are as hard as wood. Just try what you can do with them yourself."

But Mr. Bineau would not be appeased until Mr. Ducrocq had over and over again assured him that the Cathedral choristers would pronounce the verses more distinctly.

Small rehearsals now succeeded one another with rapidity, and made the leader often think that it would have been easier to command an army than manage a concert. Ill-will and dissatisfaction met him on all sides; the person paid by the Corporation of Laon to direct the gratis public class of singing and band of the National Guard, went everywhere sowing doubts as to the success of the grand symphony. Madame Marcillet the younger, whose opinion carried much weight, also spoke with the greatest contempt of the intended concert, and refused to take tickets to distribute among her friends, as she usually did, pretending that she did not wish to mix herself up with the failure that she was persuaded would occur. Mr. Tassin, who was on the alert, and foresaw the danger of drawing on himself any powerful enmities, expostulated with Ducrocq, and ended by convincing him that it was for the interest of all parties to yield; so the tortured leader bowed his lofty head and requested the lady to honour his concert by singing at it. Madame

Marcillet the younger, of course, made a hundred difficulties; "really the request had come so late, and she had so little expected it, that she was not sure she could be prepared;" but at last, with a very ill-disguised joy, consented to give her assistance.

The greatest obstacles, however, were not overcome when the vanity of lady and gentlemen amateurs was satisfied; every separate rehearsal served only to shew Mr. Ducrocq what an almost impossible task he had undertaken; for in the whole band of musicians who were to execute the symphony, there were not five who really understood anything of music.

Mr. Ducrocq feeling that he would be the better of some support, sought to change his rival, the other Professor of music, into an ally, by asking him to lead the first part of the concert, leaving him full powers as to the formation of its programme; for the College Professor thought that the hackneyed music to which amateurs are so peculiarly addicted, would be a great set off to his own new and scientific composition. At length, after a month of incredibly hard work, he was able to announce that his symphony, to be executed by eighty performers, was ready.

A grand rolling of drums, followed by a lively flourish of trumpets and horns, was intended to give notice of the entrance of the Collegians of Laon into Coucy-le-Chateau. Mr. Jannois, with his barytone voice, was to play the part of a blind old man, and sing the Lament of

Gabrielle de Vergy. The Normal School pupils were to represent the shouting, drinking, gaming, fighting, window-breaking peasants. The Guard, preceded by a drummer, was to enter and restore order. Then was to follow a joyous burst of waltzes and quadrilles from the whole orchestra, to the delight of the young men and maidens assembled, till a storm of wind, hail, and rain, breaking over head, put the dancers to flight, laid low the crops, uprooted the trees, while between the peals of thunder, distant and faint at first, but waxing louder and louder, rose the bacchanalian chorus, as if contending for supremacy; the conclusion, a crash of instruments and voices almost alarming.

There were many serious consultations between Mr. Ducrocq and the mechanist belonging to the theatre how best to place the three different orchestras which were to concur in executing this transcendent Symphony, and at last agreed that the theatre should be transformed into a concert room, by raising the pit to a level with the stage.

The eventful day of the concert at length dawned, to the great joy of Mr. Bineau, who expected, ere its close, to wear a crown of laurels. For more than a month previous he had filled the local paper with advertisements and remarks about this concert, and the news having spread to Soissons, St. Quentin, and other small towns in the neighbourhood, brought thence considerable numbers.

Little Bineau, who was a great pet of Mr. Ducrocq's, had a very important part allotted to him in the evening's performance; he was to conduct the fanfare, and to have under his orders all his class-fellows, who were to be provided with tin trumpets, rattles, and whistles, the better to represent some of the humours of a fair.

Larmuzeaux, as more orderly and steady than the rest, was recommended by Bineau as the one to whom could be most safely intrusted the hail, thunder, and lightning, and any other materials for the storm. Canivet and Lagache were to be his subordinates, and at a signal from him had to fling down from the loft, where they were to be perched, pieces of broken bottles, to imitate the crash of glass in the drunken fray. An orchestra had been specially arranged for the pupils of the Normal School, who, it may be remembered, had to personate the drinkers in the ale-house.

The brass instruments, under little Bineau's direction, were to be placed at first in a passage communicating with the second gallery, in order to produce the effect of the military music of a regiment at a distance. As soon as the fanfare was over, Bineau and his school-fellows were to rush down the back stair leading from the loft of the theatre, and to make their way behind the scenes to their places in the middle of the formidable orchestra of instrumental players and chorists, led by Mr. Ducrocq in person, seated on an elevated dais.

By degrees the boxes filled; and many remarked with

surprise the presence of the Misses Carillon, who had never before by any chance been seen at a ball or a play; they were all three dressed in white, with natural flowers in their hair, and they excited a good deal of attention when they first entered their box. Exactly opposite to them was Madame Marcillet the younger, who shone forth in all the extravagant finery of a country-town belle; on her head was a turban with feathers, that forcibly recalled the well-known picture of Corinne on Cape Mysene. Every head was bent forward to endeavour to see how the three orchestras had been arranged, and every heart beat fast in expectation of the momentous event.

The first part of the concert was scarcely listened to, the sad remains of the Philharmonic Society inspired neither interest nor curiosity, for the audience had probably heard the overture they were now playing at least forty times before. General attention, however, was aroused by Madame Marcillet, who was going to sing: *Je veux t'aimer, mais sans amour.* She had gone first to a box, on purpose that in making her way through the crowd in the pit to the piano, she might attract universal observation, and her object was certainly attained by the disturbance she caused. After various little manœuvres preconcerted with the pianoforte accompanist, she began, and had got as far as the verse, "*Je veux t'aimer, mais sans te le dire,*" when a loud crack, evidently somewhere close at hand, made her stop.

A momentary panic ran through the audience ; people began to question whether the planking over the pit was not too heavily loaded ; but the mechanist came forward from behind the scenes, and protested that planking always cracked, loaded or not, that it was the same used at the last masquerade, and that he answered for its solidity.

Madame Marcillet had pretended to faint away ; several ladies hurried to her assistance—salts and scents were offered from all parts of the house; in short, she managed to keep every one in a bustle and an agitation for more than half an hour.

By dint of coaxing and flattery, Madame Marcillet was induced to begin her ballad anew, but she had scarcely sung the words, *Je veux t'aimer, mais sans te le dire*, when the same cracking, but still more alarmingly loud, made itself heard, and this time accompanied by cries of distress. The music-stands of the second violins suddenly vanished, as if by magic, and the two performers along with them. The alto, who had been asleep, awoke in mortal terror of bodily harm ; while those who had been the neighbours of the lost violinists, stared into the gaping abyss which had swallowed up their comrades. Ladies set up screaming and trying to escape, and doing all in their power to add to the confusion. Mr. Ducrocq, who during the song had gone behind the scenes, was thunderstruck by the sight of the two violin players, whom he had left in the orchestra, making their way up

one of the stairs below the stage, and looking as pale as death; as soon as they saw the glare of the footlights, they fell down overcome with fear, while to the further bewilderment of the professor of music, he beheld the mechanist, followed by some firemen, rush past, exclaiming,—

"They will crush one another to death in trying to get out."

The performers were struggling to get behind the scenes, trembling at every step they took on the treacherous boarding. Fortunately for the safety of every one, the Commissary of Police now made his appearance on the stage, wearing his official scarf.

"Ladies and gentlemen," he said, "I am happy to say that all danger is at an end; nobody is hurt; the accident was caused by the sudden slipping of a trap-door. The talented departmental architect, and our own excellent architect, have both been below the stage and the boarding over the pit, to discover what occasioned the disaster, and they assure you that nothing similar could or would happen again. However, they have ordered strong beams to be placed as additional supports to the platform, and in half an hour we shall be prepared to let the concert go on in all security."

The first part of the concert was nearly over when the tragi-comical incident occurred; the town professor therefore declared he had had enough of it, and willingly gave up the remainder of his programme; but he was

obviously angry, and hovered about behind the scenes, carrying on an animated conversation in whispers with some of the discomfited members of the ever-to-be-lamented Philharmonic Society.

"Depend on it," said the enraged musician, "this was a regular got up thing, on purpose to make our part go all wrong. I'd wager my head that *that* Ducrocq had a hand in the business, if he didn't contrive it. Why did such a thing happen exactly to OUR second violins? For my part, I shall go away; I don't want to be present at some other mishap."

His jealous, irritated feelings drove this man to try to do all the harm he could to his rival, and he succeeded so well as to entice away the only clarionet, the performer on the kettle-drums, who had a most important part in the Symphony, and the two bruised violin-players.

When Mr. Ducrocq came to review his orchestra, he perceived with surprise the disappearance of these four musicians; but he was not a man easily to lose his presence of mind; he quietly ordered the kettle-drums to be handed up to him on his dais, placed a clarionet on his own desk, and gave the signal for the drums to beat the march which announced the arrival of the Collegians within the walls of Coucy. It had been agreed upon that little Bineau, who, with his brass-instrument players, was stationed in the passage of the second gallery, should make a sign that he was ready, to the

Conductor, and as soon as the drums ceased his fanfare was to commence. Mr. Ducrocq raised his eyes towards the second gallery, but no Bineau was to be seen; all hardened as he was to every sort of theatrical blunders, the Conductor began to lose his self-possession, for he felt that such a mischance at the very opening of his symphony was a bad omen.

The public was at a loss to understand what could be the meaning of this interminable roll of drums, which boasted a monotony anything but agreeable to the ear. Five minutes, still no Bineau! Mr. Ducrocq stood up, seeking for the little truant in every corner, high and low. Big drops of perspiration gathered on the forehead of the agitated Conductor, who distinctly heard the murmurs of the audience, exasperated by the continued rat-tat-tata of the drums. At last, after a quarter of an hour of misery, little Bineau's cocked hat appeared, swaying backwards and forwards as if on the head of some one trying to force a passage through the compact crowd filling the second gallery.

The trumpets and horns sounded from above, and the singularity of the effect produced did away in some measure with the unfortunate impression made by the drums. Immediately after, Mr. Jannois came forward to the front of the stage, bowed gracefully, and began the first couplet of the Lament, supposed to be sung by the blind old man.

Caroline touched her sister's elbow, and Mr. Jannois

in continuing his song, continued at the same time to send many a soft glance in the direction of the Misses Carillon's box.

"He seems to know me," said Dr. Triballet, who had accompanied the sisters; "in fact, I remember meeting that young man sometimes at the younger Madame Marcillet's house."

"Caroline, as may be imagined, did not lose one half note of poor Gabrielle de Vergy's Lament; she was completely fascinated; it seemed to her as if she were listening to an angel's voice, and so rapt were all her senses, that she started as if a gun had been fired off at her ear, when a little pattering sound, like dried peas or small gravel striking against the panes of a window, began to accompany the singer. Mr. Ducrocq looked up angrily towards the cornices; the noise ceased.

The whole house rapturously applauded Mr. Jannois, who was singing in a touchingly melancholy voice the sorrows of the Lords of Coucy, when, in the very midst of the complaint, again was heard the same patter, patter, as if of hail or dried peas, falling at intervals of longer or shorter duration, but always growing louder and faster until at last the singer's voice was quite overpowered. The Conductor shook his clarionet fiercely at the roof, and ground his teeth in futile rage; he had been obliged to take the place of the musician who had deserted him, and who was to have accompanied the blind man's song; and such was his concentrated passion

at the singular racket and rattle, apparently proceeding from the ceiling, that he actually bit through the reed of the clarionet.

"They have set agoing the hail up there," cried the mechanist, rushing away to the unknown regions behind the farthest back scene of all, in the hope of stopping the evil. Very soon loud lamentations mingled with the rattling; the audience pricked up their ears wondering what could be the meaning of this part of the mimical symphony.

When Bineau passed along the half-lighted passage with the class-fellows committed to his care on his way to the orchestra, he had found Larmuzeaux quietly seated close to a large square box suspended by means of a pulley and rope, and which only needed to be slightly set swinging to make the pebbles inside of it hit against each other and the sides of the box, and thus produce a hard dry sound sufficiently resembling hail.

But Canivet and Lagache began quarrelling with Larmuzeaux, and from high words proceeding to angry deeds, they collared the former drum-major and shoved him against the wooden box, which, made to yield to the slightest impetus, began performing its stormy part much before the proper time.

Larmuzeaux unable to make head against two adversaries at once, thought it wisest to seek safety in flight, and took refuge in a little dark passage he had caught a glimpse of; but this passage was merely a narrow plank,

serving as a communication between two scenes; closely pursued by Canivet, unconscious of the danger of what he was doing, Larmuzeaux who all of a sudden felt his legs dangling in mid-air, began to scream violently, holding on for dear life's sake.

A violent emotion thrilled every heart in the assembled crowd when above the heads of the musicians two legs unexpectedly appeared, of which no mention was made either in the programme or the poem. The mechanist, who fortunately understood the boy's critical situation, tried to drag him up on the plank by the hair of the head, but this proceeding far from stopping, only redoubled Larmuzeaux's shrieks. No symphony in the world could have competed successfully with the interest of this agonizing scene; the mechanist's voice sounded dreadfully clear calling out these alarming directions,— "Hold on tight, don't be frightened."

But still the widow's son continued to utter cries that pierced the heart and soul of all present; every one was ready with some plan or advice. At length one of the pupils of the Normal School, who had a higher stool than the others, contrived to get hold of one of Larmuzeaux's legs, and to drag him down in the sight of the terrified spectators, and land him safe and sound among the musicians. He was deadly pale, and fainted away the moment he felt himself out of danger.

The greater part of the spectators firmly believed that an ascension formed part of the plot of the Symphony,

and puzzled themselves with conjectures how the unlucky boy had so nearly converted a comedy into a tragedy. Mr. Bineau sat in a corner biting his lips, sorely distressed and indignant at seeing his poetry so cut up by one woful accident after the other. By chance he met Mr. Tassin, who was running right and left, speaking first to one and then to another, but assuring all that a great fuss had been made about nothing, and that the Symphony was to go on immediately. The Principal of the College and the Registrar suddenly came upon Mr. Ducrocq, who was swearing like a dozen troopers.

"It's those two little blackguards," said the conductor, "to whom I gave the hail and the thunder, who have done all the mischief."

"But why on earth did you trust children with such an important post?"

"Bless me, sir! I can't do everything myself."

"Why didn't you offer" . . .

"I am sure I am quite willing to do my best," said Mr. Bineau.

"Very well, that's settled; we will go up and manage the thing ourselves," said Mr. Tassin.

"You understand, Mr. Bineau, that the hail and thunder are to begin at the third couplet of the drinking chorus."

"Yes, yes, I understand all that very well," answered the Registrar.

Peace being re-established, Mr. Ducrocq gave the pre-

arranged signal to the Collegians to sound their penny-trumpets and rattles, but it was too late. The audience had lost all confidence, and the little fifes, whistles, and trumpets, were received with hisses. Enchanting waltzes and quadrilles had been intended to overwhelm these infantine sounds, but the orchestra had grown discouraged. The musical mimicry of a dialogue between maidens and their sweethearts fell flat, and the stentorian voices of the pupils of the Normal School completed the ruin of the grand symphony, the end of which was not even listened to, for everybody was rising and going away, banging to the box-doors to escape from such a deafening uproar.

In five minutes the theatre was empty, with the exception, however, of about fifty Collegians, who had taken advantage of such a propitious moment to scatter themselves in every direction, charmed to explore dark passages, odd holes, and to penetrate into the mysteries that lie behind a drop-scene. Mr. Tassin had a two-hours' search after them, and, whatever were his feelings, theirs was unmixed delight; they had never been so thoroughly happy before in the whole course of their lives.

"What do you think of Mr. Jannois?" said Caroline to her sister, who, from the time she had entered the box, had never uttered a word.

"His looks are pleasing," answered Sophy, in a voice that sadly belied her words.

"How he was applauded—wasn't he?" continued

Caroline; "but it is a great pity he should have been mixed up with such a riot."

"Take Bertha's arm," said Sophy; "poor Mr. Triballet looks like a lost sheep walking alone behind us;" and Miss Carillon turned back and kindly took the arm of the fat little Doctor.

"Mr. Triballet," she began, "you are acquainted with almost every one in the town, and, that being the case, you can do me a great service."

"Anything in my power, Miss, I am ready to do for you, as you well know."

"Thank you. Well, I have been asked to get some information about that young man who sang at the concert this evening."

"About Mr. Jannois?"

"Exactly so."

"That won't be very difficult," said the Doctor; "but what sort of information do you want?"

"As to his means, and his private character."

"Ah! I see there is some question of a marriage?"

"No—it is a money matter."

"I don't put much faith in appearances," observed the Doctor; "and, from all I have ever heard, Mr. Jannois is a very extravagant man, and over head and ears in debt."

"Really?"

"It seems that he fancies that some most splendid destiny awaits him. He is a proud young fellow. He

has given up seeing one of his cousins, because she keeps a tobacconist's shop. . . . He gambles, too; and Mr. Marcillet won't have anything more to do with him since he lost twelve hundred francs to him."

"Ah, Doctor! you can't think how obliged to you I am." . . .

"To-morrow, or the day after, I shall find out more."

Just as the Doctor was saying good night to the sisters at the turning into their street, an angry female voice was heard.

"It is Mr. Bineau and his wife," whispered Bertha, who had recognised them by the light of the street lamp.

"I told you so all along, Mr. Bineau," said Mrs. Bineau; "you will be the laughing-stock of the whole town, with your nonsensical poetry. I watched the Prefect's face, seated there in his box, all the time that horrible noise was going on. You think, perhaps, that he looked pleased, and charmed, and delighted? No, no, no, Mr. Bineau! not a bit more than I was, or any one else who had the misfortune to be there; and he felt, I could see it in his eyes, that he and we should have done better to keep our money in our pockets, instead of throwing it away on such a crack-brained performance. To think of your going on in such a way, and at your age, . . . inventing stories and poetry.—Mercy on me! I wonder what the world will come to at last! I wouldn't have believed it possible if I hadn't seen it myself—the

idea of paying to listen to tin trumpets and penny whistles, as if people couldn't hear enough of them at any fair, and better played into the bargain. And so that's what you have your son taught, to squeak through a baby's trumpet? I'll teach you to trumpet and whistle with a vengeance," said she, giving little Bineau, whom she was dragging along by the hand, a good shake. "And those Normal School savages, just like so many big bellowing bulls of Bashan! It was worse than being in a cow-house, I declare. I wish to goodness you would tell me what it all meant?—broken bottles, too, and glasses, I declare it *is* too bad! I don't think there ever was such a mockery. Everybody was disgusted, I can tell you. As for me, I felt ready to sink into the earth, for every one knew (you had taken precious good care they should) that you were the author of all that abominable twaddle. If you had only had the wit to keep it all secret—but no! you must needs go and tell it all about the town, and, not satisfied with that—Oh dear, oh dear! you must go and put it into the very newspapers. I wonder you didn't get up on the roof of the house and publish the wonderful, extraordinary news, by beat of drum! We have had enough of drums, I hope—my poor head is splitting."

"It was all Louis's fault!" exclaimed Mr. Bineau, hoping to shelter himself from the storm.

"It wasn't me," said little Bineau.

"I don't excuse Louis; but if it hadn't been for you,

Mr. Bineau, nothing of the kind would have happened; and I stick to that."

"And, papa, you know very well that you made the thunder at the wrong time."

"What next? what next?" cried Mrs. Bineau; "you, Mr. Bineau! you make thunder!"

"Yes," said little Bineau; "and papa and Mr. Tassin never kept the time."

"Well, I declare I never heard the like; that just completes the business. Pray, may I ask if you are going to take up a new profession?" added Mrs. Bineau sarcastically.

"There was nobody else to do it."

"The greater idiot you then; pray, what was the use of your thunder, hail, and lightning, and your smart Collegian dangling in the air?"

"But, my dear, you don't understand. It was precisely on account of that unfortunate little fellow" . . .

"Don't talk nonsense, Mr. Bineau; the child might have been killed, and who would have got the blame—can you tell me that?—why, you and your horrid murdering poetry. And that's not the worst of it; but Heaven only knows what the Prefect will say! I am sure you won't dare to show your nose in the office to-morrow; the clerks will quiz you nicely—that's certain. How you are ever to face them again, I don't know."

"Why don't you fall foul of Mr. Tassin," cried Mr.

Bineau, at last losing his patience; "it's all his fault; he made me write for his stupid musician" . . .

"Made you! I like that," retorted Mrs. Bineau. "Are not you a man as well as Mr. Tassin? I should like to see any man try to make me do anything. By what right, pray, does Mr. Tassin act the schoolmaster over you?"

"By what right!" repeated Mr. Bineau, now flaming up; "well, madam, since you will have it, you shall. If Louis hadn't thrown the crocodile out of the window" . . .

"Why, you are mad, dreaming, Mr. Bineau. Louis! what on earth had Louis to do with the crocodile?"

"I know what I am saying very well, Mrs. Bineau."

"It isn't true," said little Bineau.

"You dare to give the lie to your father, sir!" bawled Mr. Bineau, turning round on Louis. "Well, madam, allow me to tell you, that this young gentleman, your son, madam, and not the Misses Carillon's nephew, threw the crocodile out of the window. Yes—the other little boy was falsely accused; Louis, and one of his good-for-nothing friends, injured that fine specimen, and the matter might have become serious enough for us, if I had not bought Mr. Tassin's silence by making poetry for him."

"And you never told me a word of this before!" exclaimed Mrs. Bineau. "That is too bad; and, as for you," continued she, turning to Louis, "you may de-

pend on having as sound a whipping as you ever had in your life."

Little Bineau began to cry, declaring that he was not the guilty one, and that he was falsely accused.

" You little story-telling rascal!" said the Registrar; " why, one of the crocodile's teeth was found in your desk."

This stopped little Bineau's assertions of innocence, and, when he got home, his mother kept her promise so well, that all his life long he remembered the penalty he had paid for his father's poetry, and the ill success of the grand military Symphony.

CHAPTER IX.

THE INFERNAL MACHINE—A DOCTOR IN LOVE—THE SUFFERINGS OF A PROFESSOR.

Caroline Carillon did not fail to remark Sophy's unusually low spirits during the week which followed the concert. Both sisters felt confused and uncomfortable whenever their eyes chanced to meet, and tacitly they avoided being together. The eldest did not dare to clothe with words her impressions regarding Mr. Jannois. He had struck her as a frivolous, affected, fine gentleman—heartless, and full of a got-up fictitious melancholy. She grieved over Caroline's unfortunate choice, but in silence, for she knew how vain would be advice or expostulation on such a subject. This was the uneasy state of Miss Carillon's mind, when one morning, not seeing Caroline come down stairs at the habitual hour, she went up to her room to find out the reason.

The bed had not been slept in, the drawers and closets were all standing open, everything was in disorder. The sight rooted Sophy to the spot. As her eye lighted on a letter, pushed under the frame of the looking-glass, a

presentiment of some misfortune chilled her from head to foot. She took the paper, wet with many, many tears; it was addressed, "To my sister Sophy," and, with a shudder, the poor milliner sought her own room to read what she guessed must be the sad contents.

"My kind Sister,—When you receive this, I shall be far away. Forgive me, and think that one reason why I leave you is that our mutual affection may not fade away. I have felt that you do not understand or appreciate the being on whom I have fixed my affections, and for whom I am resolved to quit my home. I have reasoned with myself, I have over and over again told myself that I am an ungrateful bad sister, and yet I go. At my wish, he has obtained at Dunkirk an appointment similar to the one he holds here; from thence we can easily cross to England to be married there, where, we are told, that being both of us of age we do not need the consent of his father and mother. I go, for my life is bound up in him. We three sisters can no longer continue living as we have done; our real intimacy has long ceased. Farewell to my former calm existence; farewell to tranquillity; farewell to my girlhood;—I sacrifice all for him who possesses my affections, yet who may, perhaps, some day reproach me for this very sacrifice. He may cease to love me; my heart is full of doubt and misgiving, and yet I set out this very night. You did not hear me,

though I have been listening at your door, and I would have given ten years of my life to embrace you once more. I saw the light gleaming under your door, you were still awake then, perhaps thinking of me, whose heart is breaking at the thought of the sorrow I am about to cause you. We shall travel together by the coach that sets out at midnight; he is waiting for me now at the back-door; we shall not stop anywhere until we reach England, and are married. He says we shall be able to live well, but simply, on his salary at Dunkirk. Little did I foresee all this when I received his first visit, and concealed it from you. How inexplicably are we drawn on by one false step! Yet I have struggled with myself. All this day I have been lingering over the packing of my trunk, putting in the things one by one, very slowly, with always a faint fluttering hope that I should never put in the last; that I should surely end by going down stairs and throwing myself into your arms—but still I went on—O Sophy! what is this strange power which drags us on to act even against our own will? I go, but remember, without being in any way forced by him; I go of my own free will, and you must never, never cast a reproach on him. I repeat, that I alone have decided my fate. Long ago, we settled all about our departure; we used to talk over all the details with perfect coolness when we were together, but alone, in my own room, I felt the sense of my ingratitude towards you, and the conviction that one day, sooner or later, I should pay the

penalty of it, that punishment would overtake me. What will you say to Bertha ? will it be best to tell her the whole truth, or to leave her in ignorance of my fate ? Sometimes I have thought, that once I was married and settled at Dunkirk, I would write letters in which, for her sake, I would never say a syllable of my happiness, and only express my remorse and repentance—it might do her good, you know, coming from a sister. And our poor Charles Marie, whom I have loved as much as you did, don't let him know how naughty his aunt Caroline has been ; tell him that I have gone on a journey, a long, long journey—for ever gone ! Certainly, it is best for me to go ; it might get talked about, and we have been laughed at and joked about quite enough already. I have put on a thick veil, so the landlady at the coach-office won't be able to see my face ; she does not know my name, so, at all events, appearances are kept up. Farewell, my sister ; my dear sister, forgive me, your words of warning are sounding in my ears ; remember me to good Mr. Delteil, and to Mr. Triballet also ; kiss my dear nephew for me, and rest assured, that not in one minute of my future life, no matter in what situation I may be, shall I not think of you, and love you, whose heart I am about to wound so deeply.—Farewell !

" Just as I was going to close this letter—I pause—it is yet time—I have still ten minutes more in my own power—I may yet remain with you, in this same little room, where so many peaceful years of my life have been

spent, in which I have slept so calmly in my little bed with its white curtains. I dare not look at the hands of the old clock, all that I have to remind me of my mother —my poor mother! Should I do what I am now doing if she were alive! I cannot venture to say yes—and yet have you not been as kind to me as any mother? we have never had any quarrels, you have always taken upon you to bear the many hardships of our lives, and after all, I stab you to the heart and leave you. He is just come through the old gate-way, I hear his step, though he is treading so lightly.—It is too late now to draw back—what could I say to him?—Farewell, Sophy, once more."

As Sophy read this letter, so full of hesitation and of misgivings, she felt as if the hand of death was on her; she could not breathe; she could not weep; she read each sentence over and over, a prey to overwhelming, benumbing anguish. She would have given worlds to have set off that instant with post-horses in pursuit of her sister, and there she remained as if nailed to her chair—voice, tears, strength, all failed her, and helpless and forlorn, she remained motionless for more than an hour, recovering from this state of prostration only to go again to Caroline's room. Long did she gaze at every piece of furniture, everything spoke of Caroline; hours must have passed ere she remembered how strange it must appear her being so long up stairs; she then locked

and double-locked the door, putting the key into her pocket.

In the passage she met Mr. Delteil, quite well again, going to the College, and going cheerfully, for all he now did bore the impress of the happiness of a man lately restored to health. Sophy passed on without paying any attention to the Professor, who had stopped and was only waiting for one word from her to let the sunshine of his feelings beam upon her. Mr. Delteil, disconcerted at being so entirely overlooked, scarcely ventured to make a bow, and as he went on his way, questioned himself sadly, whether all the interest Miss Carillon had shewn in him lately, was not due altogether to the circumstance of his dangerous illness.

The Professor had one of those sensitive natures that the merest nothing can wound deeply, and which, in fear of the egotism of mankind in general, shut themselves up from all external contact. While he was ill, whenever, after some fearful dream, his eyes rested on the gentle countenance of Sophy Carillon, the dark phantoms, born of fever, had vanished instantaneously, and Mr. Delteil had come to look upon her as the good angel, at sight of whom the bitter realities of life spread their great black wings and flew away, leaving the sky for ever clear, for ever blue.

Since his convalescence, existence was no longer what it had been to him before, and the Professor, with the most childlike simplicity, began to reproach himself

with his life-long seclusion from the world, for being steeped to the lips in Greek, and also to look with disgust at his shabby black clothes. At fifty years of age, he suddenly made the discovery that the youth he had never expended was not extinct, but only lying dormant, and he rose from his bed of sickness with the joyousness of a worthy citizen of Paris, delighted to wear a flower in his button-hole on Sundays.

During the different stages of his recovery he had been used to take short walks, in which happy thoughts like painted butterflies fluttered gaily about him. But this meeting with Miss Carillon had produced much the same effect on him as a gust of wind on an illumination. The brilliant lights which had gilded even him were suddenly put out, and he saw himself once more in his true colours, that is, clad within and without in dingy black. He felt himself once more a withered old pedant, with only one tie in life, and that a Greek Dictionary; with nothing in prospect but an isolated existence. The ringing of the College bell at this moment reminded him by its dismal sound of yet another suffering, the drudgery of a teacher.

When he reached the College, Mr. Tassin was walking up and down the entrance court, talking with great animation to an usher; as soon as he perceived Mr. Delteil, he came straight towards him, and began in a loud overbearing voice, "I am glad to see you, sir, as I have some remarks to make to you relative to your class.

Yes, sir, allow me to tell you that you have kept so little discipline among your pupils from the very beginning, that they are become not only unbearable in themselves, but they go about disseminating corruption. They have behaved in such a way during your absence, as to prove that the fault rests with you; the time for the Inspectors' visit is at hand, and I warn you, sir, to prepare to reap the fruits of your system of tuition. I tell you candidly beforehand, that I am not the least inclined to bear the blame of the ignorance and unruly conduct of your pupils; I shall take care to make the Inspectors perfectly understand what your share has been in their education; as for me, I have pupils of whom I can own with pride that I am their master."

Once again did Mr. Delteil bend his head beneath the storm of his superior's words, seeking his class, sadder than a prisoner who sees his dungeon door open to receive him. Nevertheless, the sight of his pupils gave him a certain pleasure; although no sympathy had ever existed between them and him, yet the Professor was glad to behold again the white-washed walls, the dark wooden benches, the desks covered with names and rough designs, roughly carved with penknives.

How much would these feelings have been increased, had even one of his class come forward to embrace him, had any one asked after his health, or showed in short that he had been remembered. His pupils had remembered only the wicked tricks they had played their unfor-

tunate Professor; these they did remember, and a malicious smile passed over every one of their faces, as Mr. Delteil entered. One proof of remembrance, which he could well have dispensed with, met his eye—a likeness of himself, larger than life, sketched with charcoal, and hung up above his reading-desk.

During the Professor's absence, some of the boys had invented a very clever contrivance, and well calculated to elude the watchfulness of the strictest master. They had constructed in their desks little sloping covered ways, forming various sinuosities, along which marbles could be impelled, rolling gently at first, then rumbling away rapidly, till at last falling with a sharp rattle on bits of glass or slate, they disappeared as if by magic.

This manœuvre could be managed without the boy being perceived who was manœuvring; the desk-lid being kept shut, he might appear to be studying with the greatest attention; when all of a sudden, by means of a string, cunningly fastened in a corner, he could set the marbles a-going, and in an instant the noise ran from one end of the class to the other, apparently beginning in one desk, and before you could be certain that it was there, heard in some other—first here, then there, always recommencing at the opposite extremities.

Within an hour after he had taken his seat, this species of salute was fired off in Mr. Delteil's honour. At first, being far from any suspicion of such a mechanical contrivance, he uttered several times an authoritative

Hush ! to which, of course, the marbles paid no attention. Mr. Delteil listened, and wondered for some minutes in silence at what this unaccountable disturbance could proceed from, and bent every power of mind and sight to detecting its author or authors. Presently he saw, putting back some marbles into his desk, Bineau, who was in the very act of setting them sliding, when the Professor, watching his opportunity, pretending all the while to be intent on his book, darted out of his pulpit at the same instant that the marbles striking on the piece of glass, allowed of no mistake.

To his great surprise, Mr. Delteil found Bineau perfectly ready to open his desk ; and as at first sight no proofs of any guilty machination appeared, the Professor thought his ear must have deceived him. Still the rumbling went on, and that, too, as if under his very hand, until in a sudden fit of exasperation, the Professor dealt an angry blow on a wall of books, which had been cunningly built up to protect this invention. The fall of the fortification made visible the ingeniously contrived groove, leading down first to the fragment of glass, and then striking off at right angles, something in the style of the winding walks of an English garden. But as to marbles, there was no trace of any to be seen, for at the further end of the last declivity, there had been bored a hole, communicating with an excavation in the table below, into which the marbles slipping, could be seized by an accomplice, and thus allow the crime to be denied.

While Mr. Delteil was pursuing his search with all the ardour of a custom-house officer on the frontier, another machine began working within a very few steps. Wherever the Professor turned, every facility for discovery was afforded him, but nowhere could he lay his finger on any tangible evidence, till, really disheartened, he yielded the point and returned to his seat, seriously debating within himself whether it would not be his best course to give up so turbulent a class now and for ever. And yet two of the worst pupils had left, Robert and Dodin, the latter having fallen a victim to his intolerable greediness.

As for Robert, he was destined to be the martyr of his father's economy. Mr. Robert had been so happy as to obtain the means of providing his son with a new suit of clothes at small expense, in consequence of the death of a relation of his, a *curé*, from whom he inherited a priest's black gown. Out of this a tailor of talent had managed to make a pair of trousers, a waistcoat, and a cap, besides a sort of cape, pompously designated by Mr. Robert a cloak. But young Robert's school-fellows guessed immediately, from the worn look of these new habiliments,—the stuff of which, never very thick, had been reduced by time and wear to the texture of a cobweb,—that this fresh suit of sables was part of the priest's legacy. The cap, waistcoat, and nether garments, had all been made of an ample size, to avoid the danger of "Robert the little" outgrowing them; but in carrying

out this laudable intention, the tailor had recklessly wasted the material, not caring to lay by any for himself, according to the immemorial custom among brethren of the shears—so that when Robert the great declared that he expected to have a cloak for the heir-apparent also out of the priestly robe, the tailor trembled, for there remained only a few miserable shreds. However, by dint of a most ingenious patch-work, a small cape was obtained, reaching down to about the middle of the boy's back.

It is a custom in almost all schools for the boys to give any school-fellow who appears in new clothes a good thrashing, and this is termed "smoothing the seams" for him. Now, although the late Rector's gown had first seen the light some quarter of a century before, the Collegians took advantage of its metamorphosis to leave Robert the younger lying in the court half-dead with the drubbing they had bestowed on him. Even this punishment was not considered sufficient for the official tell-tale. Every day when he came in with his basket on his arm, which stuck out in full view below and beyond the famous cape, he was assailed by contemptuous groans and hisses, directed as much against his comical dress as against his despicable self. He had been nicknamed "the Priest;" for children have a marvellous instinct for divining all such sorts of mysteries with regard to one another's clothes.

It came about in this wise that Dodin was another

victim to the Priest's legacy. The holy man, in dying, had left a collection of liqueurs, about which little Robert never could speak but with eyes distended by wonder. Wishing to keep one ally amid so many enemies, he took Dodin by his weak side—love of good things, and invited him to taste some precious Noyau, which he had discovered in its shady retreat on a certain top-shelf.

Dodin joyfully accepted the proposal; and, for several of the half-holidays on Thursdays, while Mr. Robert was out, Dodin used to clamber up the shelves of the closet and bring down the flask of Noyau; but one day, when he had just swung himself up to the perilous height, with one foot on a lower shelf, and one hand holding on by the highest, while with the other he grasped the prize, Dodin heard Mr. Robert come home, and so great was his companion's terror that it proved contagious, and down he slipped bottle in hand, spraining his ankle so severely that he was unable to move from his chair for three months.

Mr. Robert took care that his son should not easily forget having participated in such a crime, but the correction administered on that occasion was mere child's play to what happened when the little cape disappeared, meeting a watery end in the College-well, into which the Collegians, who had taken a peculiar spite to the Priest's relics, had one day precipitated it. In a state of the highest indignation, Mr. Robert at once removed his son from the College to Mr. Tanton's school.

With the exception of these two pupils, Mr. Delteil found his class as he had left it, and unfortunately no better disposed for study. Larmuzeaux had, indeed, laid aside the brilliant uniform of a drum-major, but was now sedulously devoted to the education of an owl, which he kept carefully shut up in his desk. His natural melancholy seemed daily to increase by his great intimacy with the solemn bird of night, to which he addressed the tenderest orations. The stale meat which he bought from the College cook, and the frogs he brought back from his walks, gave his desk the smell of a menagerie; and more than once Mr. Delteil had, on coming into the class, gone snuffing about, at a loss to understand from whence arose such a disagreeable scent. In too cruel a way was the mystery revealed to him.

Lagache, who was always lying in wait to play his neighbour Larmuzeaux a trick, seized a favourable opportunity, and took away the keys of his desk. Larmuzeaux, in great uneasiness, and supposing he must have dropped them in the court, asked leave to go out. He was scarcely out of the room when Lagache opened the desk, and flung the owl in the direction of the Professor's pulpit. Mr. Delteil, who was very busy, raised his head on hearing a peculiar noise, and uttered a cry of terror on perceiving the bird gravely seated on his papers.

"Drive away this bird!" cried he in a voice full of alarm.

The pupils, feigning to be dreadfully frightened, left

their benches, huddling together or rolling on the ground, and shrieking as if they were being murdered. Tired of this, under the pretence of chasing away the owl, they set to flinging dictionaries, lesson-books, copy-books, anything they could lay their hands on, at each other's heads, Mr. Delteil all the while repeating, in the lamentable tone of a drowning man, "Drive away this bird! drive him away, pray!"

When, in the midst of this tumult, the Professor began to recover his presence of mind, he ordered the prison, which communicated with the class-room, to be opened; but as no one thought of obeying, he determined to execute his own orders. The owl, pursued on all sides, seeing a dark place, naturally flew into the prison; but Lagache and Bineau, pretending great anxiety to prevent its escaping again, pushed the door to in such a way as to shut Mr. Delteil up as well as the bird.

Larmuzeaux, coming back without any news of his keys, and with a certain misgiving of some trick, found the whole class holding hands, and going round and round, drowning, with the uproar of this madlike dance, the groans of the unlucky Professor. He ran to his desk, without paying any attention to what was going on, lifted the lid, and at once saw that his owl was gone.

"Where is my owl?" he screamed.

Twenty fingers pointed to the prison, and, in the twinkling of an eye, he was pushed forward by the

united strength of the class, and hustled into the cell with Mr. Delteil and the owl.

A demoniacal frenzy now possessed these boys, who had got intoxicated with their own excitement, just like their prototypes in Paris, when they set to work building barricades. Some had placed their backs against the door, lest it should yield to the desperate efforts Mr. Delteil and Larmuzeaux were making to burst it open, while the rest dragged benches, desks, and tables, and piled them up before the prison, all of them screaming and roaring like so many Red Indians, striving by riot and noise to drown all remaining sense of discipline.

Through a slit in the upper part of the prison-door, the Professor one instant shoved his nose, the next his hand, in a feeble attempt to quell the rebellion, but the mutiny was at its height. Cucquigny got into the Professor's reading-desk, and, making the most horrible faces, began holding forth in a solemn manner, and in a nasal voice, repeating the famous macaronic oration,— "Prechit Preachat, the tail of a cat;" at the same time, to prevent the Professor's having a chance of bringing back any of the boys to obedience, Canivet never ceased throwing through the hole in the prison-door everything within his reach,—pens, paper, inkstands, and books, all went flying in.

At length loud, authoritative knocks were heard at the door of the class-room; a dead silence immediately took the place of the deafening uproar. Charles

Marie, who had remained a silent spectator of the whole of this disgraceful scene, was the only one who dared to open the door. Mr. Tassin entered, and at one glance observed the empty reading-desk, and the pallid, downcast looks of the pupils. From the prison issued low sounds of lamentation. Without saying a word the Principal went and opened the dungeon door, pushing on one side the desks. The moment afterwards out hurried Mr. Delteil, as terrified and livid as Larmuzeaux, who, besides, had received the contents of an ink-bottle right in his face.

In considerable agitation the Professor told Mr. Tassin how some of the boys had wickedly let loose an owl in the class.

"Very well," said Mr. Tassin, in an awful voice, "if any one dares to stir while I am away, he shall repent dearly of his audacity."

During the five minutes that now ensued, the Collegians would willingly have gone down on their knees to Mr. Delteil, but it was too late, for in less than five minutes the head master returned accompanied by Paterculus the porter; he called over the roll of the pupils belonging to the class, ranged them all in a row, and then ordered the first on the line to go out.

Direful wailing, mingled with prayers for mercy, arose in the passage; then Mr. Tassin reappeared and pointed out a second victim. When eight of the culprits had passed through the terrible hands of Paterculus, who

performed the functions of public executioner in flogging the Collegians, Mr. Tassin's vengeance was satisfied.

Mr. Delteil left the class in a state of greater perturbation on account of the punishment, than of the rebellion of his class.

"We need say nothing of what has happened to-day to Miss Sophy," said he to Charles Marie as they walked home.

Such was his invariable recommendation to Charles Marie, whenever any disagreeable incident had occurred, and the boy always held his tongue, probably understanding that though he bore them patiently, the old Professor was ashamed of the humiliations he was forced to endure, and shrunk from their being publicly known.

It is more than probable, that if Mr. Delteil had not promised Miss Carillon to watch over the education of her nephew, he would have quitted the College of Laon, for he was conscious of his inability to control his pupils. He often argued the point with himself, recognised his own weakness of mind and body, understood perfectly the means he ought to adopt to secure peace and quiet, yet was nevertheless incapable of putting his theories into practice. When he had taken himself well to task, when his conscience had forced him to evacuate one after the other all his mental and moral places of refuge, Mr. Delteil would then escape into the misty regions of fancy, where, amid rosy-tipped clouds, he caught glimpses of his great Greek Dictionary, bigger and more

splendid than any of the airy palaces in the Arabian Nights, the name of Didot gleaming on its noble title-page,—saw it crowned with laurels by a galaxy of the learned!—saw it, an open Sesame to the Institute!! With such visions as these, what did a rebellious set of mischievous school-boys signify?

On reaching the milliner's house, while going along the passage that led up to the second floor, the Professor perceived through a borrowed light, Mr. Triballet sitting in the shop. Contrary to what he was in general, the usually rubicund Doctor was pale, and labouring under an obvious degree of emotion, quite out of character in so fat a man. The truth was, Sophy Carillon had just been confiding to him her intentions of selling her house and business, preparatory to her leaving Laon, and settling herself in another town.

As this information had been preceded by those rhetorical shiftings which in general prognosticate some bad news, Mr. Triballet, while listening in no little anxiety of mind, had seized a pair of scissors, and according to custom, was clipping away at his hair; so startled was he, however, by hearing of Sophy's intended departure, that he actually snipped his ear, the unexpected sharp pain making him scream out. Luckily there was no great harm done. Mr. Triballet, rather ashamed of himself, asked Miss Carillon what could induce her to take so extraordinary a step. At first she alleged the very poor business she had in Laon, and which, in fact,

only just produced enough for them to live from hand to mouth, and that, did she remain ten years longer where she was, she felt convinced she should never be able to lay up one penny. She wished, above all things, to give Bertha the means of settling; she wanted to see her married.

Mr. Triballet shook his head, took all Miss Carillon's arguments to pieces, proving to her that she was thoroughly in the wrong; that, in fact, all that was wanting to make her business prosper, was a little more money employed in it, and that he was acquainted with a person who would be happy to lend a certain sum at a very reasonable rate of interest to persons of such known respectability.

"You always give good advice, Mr. Triballet," said Sophy Carillon; "besides, no one has ever shewn the interest in us you have done, and I should eventually reproach myself if I were to conceal from you any part of our sad situation. Now, read that, and then tell me, if you still think I should act wrong in quitting Laon."

So saying, she held out to him her sister's letter, which she always carried about with her, reading it continually. Numberless were the exclamations in which Mr. Triballet indulged, as he laboured to decipher certain words blotted and half obliterated,—sorrowful and accusing witnesses of the tears that had been shed over them.

When the Doctor had finished reading, he did not dare to look up, for he felt sure that Sophy was weeping,

and he knew that commonplace words of consolation give more pain than silence. He read over the last page of the letter a second time, seeking during this protracted perusal for something to say or propose, that could give the poor dispirited milliner some comfort, something to revive her lost courage.

He made no other discovery than that of turning his round blue eyes on her full of big tears, nothing to do, save to give her hand a warm and friendly pressure. Sophy guessed all he would have said, had he known how, and was grateful to him for not having spoken.

After some minutes' pause, Sophy went on to say that her sister's elopement could not fail to be known very soon in the town,—that she herself had not the fortitude to face all the public scandal that would be levelled at her and her sisters,—that already they had been sufficiently the objects of ridicule, and that she was persuaded there was nothing left for it but to sell her house. She added a hope that the Doctor would do this for her, as she did not wish to remain in Laon more than a month, just long enough to sell her stock of millinery, and settle her accounts.

Mr. Triballet's agitation was very great; he repeatedly opened his mouth without being able to articulate a word; at one moment he seemed about to say something very confidential by the tone in which he pronounced the words, "My dear young lady," but there he stopped short. Sometimes he rose from his seat, as if

he wanted to shake out the words that stuck in his throat, and yet sat down again dead silent. At last, in increasing embarrassment, he took his leave gravely, telling Miss Carillon that he should return in the evening, saying the words in such a way, that it might have been supposed they concealed some great mystery.

As the Doctor passed through Borough Place, he saw the younger Madame Marcillet's husband standing, according to his wont, before his door, one hand supporting a long clay pipe in his mouth. Mr. Marcillet never was known to leave his door or his pipe; cold and haughty-looking, he seldom spoke, but whenever he did it was to say something ill-natured, or to repeat some malignant scandal; he was always the first to know everything that had happened, or was going to happen, in Laon or its neighbourhood; the situation of his house, in the very centre of the town, favoured this propensity, for he saw all the arrivals and departures, besides having the benefit of the conversation of merchants, shopkeepers, and the *beau monde* of Laon, who all once in the day appeared in Borough Place; he was rich, and had never done anything in his whole life except smoke.

When it rained he stood under the arched door-way, when it was fine he came forward a few steps, looking for all the world like one of those highly-coloured wooden Scotchmen, standing as sentinels or decoys, or both, at the entrance of old-fashioned tobacconists' shops. The

smoker winked his eye to Mr. Triballet, who obeyed this silent invitation by going up to him.

"Well!" exclaimed Mr. Marcillet, "so one of the Misses Carillon went off three days ago, counting to-day, with Mr. Jannois, the post-office clerk."

The Doctor shrunk back, shocked to find the tale Sophy was so anxious to keep secret, already on the lips of the greatest scandal-monger in Laon.

"So one of them *has* got a husband at last—what a pity the charm is broken!—what could tempt the man to run away with an old maid? It will set the fashion, and then there will be an end of the joke against them. Oh, how they winced at it—one could see it in the very way they walked. But it was too bad of the dandy, wasn't it?"

And the smoker shook out the ashes of his pipe. Mr. Triballet was in no humour to hear a circumstance which had caused such agony to the woman he most revered, made the subject of a stupid joke. So giving Mr. Marcillet a look intended to root him to where he stood, he tossed his big round head and stumped off, receiving from Mr. Marcillet, who was perfectly unconscious of what the Doctor's look meant, another knowing wink of the same active eye.

Mr. Triballet, contrary to his habits of so many years, wandered about the whole day, up and down every street, observing the countenances of the persons he met, and as he knew them almost all, he generally accosted them

with, "Well, any news to-day?" varied to "Anything stirring?" waiting the answer with a mixture of hope and fear; for surely, thought he, Mr. Marcillet must have repeated this news and his joke at least as often as he has filled his pipe. But the Doctor heard complaints of the vines and the crops, murmurs against the wind, and the hoar-frost, and the weather in general, but not a word was said about Caroline Carillon or Mr. Jannois, and at last the fat Doctor began to breathe less sonorously, convinced that somehow or other Mr. Marcillet had not spoken to any one else on the subject, that there was as yet but one copy of the story in circulation.

Mr. Triballet even began to wonder whether the stiff smoker had not intended something personal, in selecting him as the first to be told this choice bit of gossip, for the Doctor's habit of paying two visits a day to the milliners' shop, was known all over Laon. It certainly was odd, very odd, in a man whose sole occupation in life was retailing and detailing scandal, and for whom such an event as an elopement formed an epoch in his country-town life. Were there no means of nipping this poison-dropping plant of slander in the bud? No means of cutting it down and uprooting it, so as to spare Miss Carillon a second and equally severe blow? The Doctor thought and better thought of all this, but without finding any solution to the difficulty.

Towards evening Sophy Carillon was greatly astonished to see Mr. Pelletier, the principal notary in Laon,

enter the shop, and request to speak to her alone. Sophy shewed him into the little parlour, gave him a chair, and then not without a feeling of dread, asked him to what she owed the honour of his visit.

"Miss," said the notary, "I am sent by Dr. Triballet, who has intrusted me with a very delicate commission. Be so good, therefore, as to lend me your best attention, and look upon me, not as a notary, but as Mr. Triballet's friend. Your house and business are for sale,—well, the Doctor wishes to make the purchase for ten thousand francs, ready money."

"Oh! . . . Sir!" cried the milliner, quite overpowered; "indeed, this is a kindness I cannot accept; my house is not worth such a sum; my mother only paid four thousand francs for it, and since then it has got very much out of repair."

"Excuse me, Miss Carillon, one moment; you do not, perhaps, know the ruins of the old Vaux Gate are to be removed and a new one built, and as soon as the municipality have the necessary funds the hill is to be levelled. Now, in such an eventuality, you can understand that your street will acquire a certain degree of commercial life and importance; besides this, the Corporation has just voted a sum for the erection of a new town-hall, which will cause the lane behind this house to be widened into a decent street; a regular thoroughfare. It is true that your house is old, but it is luckily within the projected line of improvements, and you have the right to do

what you please as to repairing or adorning it, inside and outside. So that you see ten thousand francs is not such an exorbitant sum to offer for it, and Mr. Triballet is not making such a bad bargain after all.—This, however, is only a part of what I have to say to you," continued Mr. Pelletier, narrowly watching Sophy Carillon's face, on which was painted the greatest surprise. "I think it better to tell it you frankly, perhaps even bluntly, my friend the Doctor has during his long acquaintance with you discovered all your superior moral qualities, and, in short, Miss, he has desired me to ask you to marry him." . . .

"Me!" cried Sophy.

"Yes, Miss Carillon, yourself. Mr. Triballet offers you his heart, hand, and fortune, and you will make him one of the happiest men alive, if you will condescend to accept this offer."

"I cannot, indeed, sir," replied Sophy, sadly.

"I beg of you, Miss Carillon, as the friend of both parties, not to decide hastily . . . you do not know how happy you will be with a man who has loved you ever since the first day he saw you, and who has remained so long timidly silent from the dread of meeting with a refusal. He is at my house now, waiting in the greatest agitation for my return. I should never have suspected the Doctor of harbouring such violent feelings—he is absolutely like a young man; you would be touched could you have heard the words in which he begged me

to undertake this mission. His life is really bound up in you; he is desperately fond of you, young lady, and he has kept his secret so well and so long, that it could not fail to burst out with vehemence when it did burst; he is rich, without any near relations; you know him well; you know he is kind and good, you have had proofs of his devotion and constancy; do not refuse him, my dear young lady. . . . At his age, repelled affections may make strange havoc in a man; he has dreamed, too, of such a happy life with you for his wife. What have you to say against him? That he is not young, perhaps?"

"Oh, no, no!" exclaimed Sophy; "it is not that."

"Then what is it? he is willing to do whatever you like; by the marriage-contract he will acknowledge the receipt of fifty thousand francs with you as your dowry. If you wish to leave Laon he will go with you wherever you like to go; in short, Madame—allow me to give you that title—unless you have some other attachment, I think you will find it difficult to assign any reasonable motive for a refusal of my friend."

"How unfortunate I am! Indeed, indeed, sir, I cannot accept Mr. Triballet," cried Sophy, deeply agitated; "but pray, do tell him, how proud, how happy, I should have been to be his wife; tell him how grateful I am to him for his affection, for all he has done for me, but that reasons I cannot explain, prevent my marrying."

"I really have not the courage to go back with this answer," said the perplexed notary; "I approved the idea,

I encouraged my friend's project of marriage, and I came to you, Miss Carillon, quite confident of success, and now you want me to go and destroy at one blow all the good Doctor's hopes of happiness. . . . I wish to heavens I had never had any hand in the business! I ought to have made him come himself."

"Ah, yes!" said Sophy; "why did he not come himself?"

"Well, then, listen to my advice, young lady; do not force me, if only out of common pity for a man who is so attached to you, to carry him a downright refusal; let him continue his visits as usual, temporize with him, and bring him by degrees to understand that this marriage is impossible."

"Certainly," answered Sophy; "I am ready to do all in my power to spare Mr. Triballet any pain that can be avoided. You see, sir, by the tears I cannot help shedding, that I suffer also. Mr. Triballet has been like a father to me, and yet I cannot shew him my gratitude."

"You have then some other attachment, Miss!"

"No, sir, my affections are free, but still I cannot think of marrying."

"What on earth am I to say to the Doctor? May I tell him to come and see you?"

"Yes, sir."

"Then he will naturally suppose that you have accepted him."

"Oh, sir! do not let him think so; tell him that

I would not listen to anything from a stranger on such a subject."

When Mr. Triballet came into the back-parlour of the milliner's house, Sophy marvelled at the alteration in his countenance produced by the emotion of the last few hours; he came in, poor man, scarcely knowing whether he stood on his heels or his head, so excessively uneasy had he been made by the confused message his friend the Notary had brought him. He was still more embarrassed by not finding Sophy alone, but seated in a large arm-chair passing her fingers fondly through the fair curls of Charles Marie, who was sitting on a low stool at her feet. In place of any conversation a deep silence prevailed; Mr. Triballet crossed, uncrossed, and recrossed, his short legs. Sophy also was anything but at her ease.

"Is he learning his lesson?" asked the Doctor at last, pointing to the little boy, who was reading.

"Yes, Doctor."

"He is quite right to study," said Mr. Triballet, and as he was near the child, he suddenly stooped and kissed his cheek.

"Do you love him a little?" inquired Sophy, in a low voice.

"I love him very much, Miss Sophy."

The conversation dropped again into the same profound silence, so profound that the ticking of the clock sounded like a great noise. Neither Sophy nor the Doctor dared

to begin on the subject that was absorbing all the thoughts of both; at length rendered desperate by her feelings of increasing embarrassment, the milliner exclaimed abruptly,—

"Mr. Pelletier communicated to me your wishes. Dr. Triballet, I am *very, very* grateful. I shall never forget the delicacy and kindness of your proposal, but the situation in which I find myself prevents my accepting an offer that would once have made me happy." . . .

"And later? Will you not allow me to hope?"

"If I could be at rest about my poor Caroline's future fate, if I had not to watch over her, to watch over this dear boy's education—for he is very dear to me" . . .

"I will wait, I will wait," cried the little Doctor, in almost a joyous tone—"Ah! my dear young lady, how you have relieved my mind! Say six months, even a year—well, I will wait; it will be a year of happy thoughts, of happy projects for us both."

"But I cannot fix any time, Doctor; you know already that I want to sell my house, that I am anxious to go and see Caroline—to see with my own eyes that she is comfortably settled; after that it will be time enough to talk over our own plans."

"These are very vague words, Miss; they are not a decided promise."

"My dear Doctor, what would you do with a woman like me, always ill, always in low spirits, more likely to bring sorrow than happiness into your home?"

"Oh! Miss Sophy, you forget all your excellence, and you describe yourself as disagreeable, only because you will not have anything to say to me. I have known you now, Miss Sophy, many a year, and in all that time I have never heard a bitter word fall from your lips; and you are so kind to your friends,—one word from you makes them better people. I have lived a long while in this world, too long perhaps, for at my age it is madness to love a person who can care but little for an old grey-headed fellow, but never have I met with a woman so modest, so simple, so good as you are, Miss Sophy."

Poor Sophy, deeply touched, perceived that she had let the conversation take a wrong turn, and she also became aware that it would be too cruel to try at once to dispel the Doctor's day-dreams; her only kind course was by letting him fancy there was a hope for him, to gain time for gradually doing away with any expectations as to her becoming his wife.

"But, Miss," recommenced Mr. Triballet, on reflecting a little, "I confess I do not understand why your sister Caroline should be an obstacle to my happiness. . . . Ah, Miss Sophy! you are keeping back your real motive. Speak openly to me; tell me, must I henceforth give up seeing you?"

"Oh, Doctor! what a child you are! Cannot you understand that I have real cause for uneasiness about my sister? Had she met with a man really devoted to her, who loved her truly—but who knows how soon

she may be a deserted wife! who knows to what despair may drive her? If I were near her, I could at least be a comfort to her: I might persuade her to return home, where, though she could never hope for happiness again, she would still have some one to cherish and love her; whereas, now in a strange town, of which she knows nothing, where she is a perfect stranger" . . .

"But my dear Miss Sophy," interrupted the Doctor, "I see not a word of this in your sister's letter."

"No, you do not, but I do," answered Sophy, every moment growing more excited; "did not you remark that though this is Caroline's first attachment, withering doubts, cruel forebodings, mingle with all her hopes? Ah! Mr. Triballet, I did not feel so" . . .

"You!" almost shouted Mr. Triballet.

"Yes, Doctor, and this is what I wanted to confess to you. Yes, I have known what it is to be ardently and faithfully attached;" and in a few hasty trembling words, Sophy related to the Doctor the story she had confided to Caroline. When she had finished she went into the shop, where Charles Marie had betaken himself as soon as the shop-lamp was lighted, to continue his reading, and throwing her arms round the boy's neck, she hid her tearful face on his curly head.

Mr. Triballet remained motionless and speechless where she had left him. Sophy presently returned, and said, "Now, you understand why I will not accept your offer."

"And what has become of your faithless husband?" asked Mr. Triballet, in a choking voice.

"Dead!" answered Sophy, "dead more than two years ago." There came a pause, and then Mr. Triballet said abruptly,

"And pray, Sophy, why won't you let me be a father to your boy?"

Sophy took the Doctor's fat hand between her own, while he, unable to bear such a sudden revulsion of feeling, closed his eyes and fell back in the chair. By means of several glasses of cold water, Sophy gradually brought him to be able to sit up by the time Bertha came in, who wondered not a little at her sister's pale face and the Doctor's agitated manner. As usual, as soon as any one came in, Mr. Triballet was in a fidget to go away, so he soon took his leave, hoping that the air would cool the intolerable beating of his empurpled head.

Some days after this scene there came directed to Mr. Delteil a large official-looking despatch, in a grey envelope, and bearing the University seal; Sophy made but one bound from the shop to the Professor's room, anxious that he should receive the precious packet without an instant's delay. Mr. Delteil was sitting, sadly leaning his elbow on his table, with his papers before him, contemplating in bitterness of spirit the proof-sheets of his Dictionary; he had been thus cast down ever since the day he had met Sophy in the passage the morning after her sister's flight.

The way in which Sophy had passed him he had attributed to indifference, and not to her being in distress. Those who have suffered much become sensitive to an excess, and feel bruised by even a doubled rose leaf; however, the way in which she now entered the room cheered him like a sunbeam.

"Good news!" exclaimed Sophy, holding out the official letter to him. "I lay any wager it is your nomination."

"Very probably," said Mr. Delteil, taking the letter; "pray, stay a moment, Miss."

"But I keep you from reading your despatch," said she; "come, let us see what it is."

Mr. Delteil put on his spectacles, and exclaimed, "Dismissed!"

"Dismissed!" repeated Sophy, "it is impossible!"

"Read it yourself, Miss Sophy."

Sophy ran her eyes hastily over the Lord Rector's letter, which was to inform Mr. Delteil, professor of the seventh class, that the University had just placed him on the retired pension list; his functions ceased at the ensuing vacation.

"It was the one single moment of ambition I ever had, Miss Sophy, that in which I asked for the chair of the eighth class, and I have been severely punished for my weakness. I was wrong, no one was thinking of me, what had I to do reminding them of my existence? . . . Never mind, one can make up one's mind to anything, Miss; and after all," he added, with a miserable

attempt at gaiety, "it is possible to live upon the little pension."

But the old Professor's voice belied his words, and he did not succeed in making Sophy believe in his contentedness.

"What a misfortune!" she exclaimed, "and to think that I was the original cause of it. Oh, Mr. Delteil! you must hate me."

"I hate you, Miss Sophy! Indeed you know I could never do that. I daresay the University is right—I am no longer fit to teach—I don't think I ever was. My Dictionary has eaten away my life, and perhaps I may never be able to finish it after all; but it is late, and I go on talking and talking. I am dismissed, to be sure, but not for a month yet."

Mr. Delteil was fated to drain the bitter cup to the very dregs. His pupils had been pretty quiet since the affair of the owl. The fact was, their imaginations just now were otherwise occupied. A universal passion for gunpowder had spread throughout the school, in consequence of the rhetoric class having let off some grand fireworks in honour of Mr. Tassin's birth-day. The boys, from the biggest to the smallest, now spent all their money in buying little cannons, notwithstanding the Principal's strict prohibition.

Canivet, by dint of thinking the matter over, discovered an economical substitute for the little brass guns, which cost very dear, and did not make a very loud

noise. His invention was to enclose some gunpowder in a piece of parchment, carefully bound and tied with twine—to put this packet into a paper covering, to be tied and bound as the first—and so on into one paper after another, always winding packthread round each, before adding the new covering, until a good thick bomb was made, in which, with a gimlet, a touch-hole was pierced; then, by means of a long fusee of touchwood, the one who set fire to the powder had time to retire before it blew up.

One morning, during school-time, Mr. Delteil perceived a smell of smouldering fire, which obviously proceeded from somewhere in the class. Well used now to his pupils' love of cooking, he left his reading-desk to hunt among the desks. All at once there was a tremendous explosion, that shook the whole room and made the pulpit rock. Mr. Delteil and the boys uttered a simultaneous shriek of terror, for the bottom of the reading-desk was blown to bits, and the chair the Professor had been sitting on the minute before, scattered in the midst of the class.

Mr. Tassin expelled Canivet from the College, for having endangered the life of Mr. Delteil and those of his class-fellows; but although this last attack had struck terror into the Professor's heart, and though he never went to the College without bodily fear, this was not the greatest trial he was called on to bear.

To Mr. Delteil the milliner's house had little by little

assumed a different aspect—the old routine was at an end—and all the little indulgences of an invalid were over for him. First of all, Miss Carillon had been absent for some days on a visit to her sister Caroline, and though she returned home more cheerful, for Caroline was happy at all events for the present, Sophy's good spirits did not tend to raise those of her lodger. Mr. Triballet was for ever now in the shop or the back-parlour, and at last, one day, the Professor's forebodings of evil were realized, for he heard from Sophy's own lips the news of her approaching marriage, and of her intention to quit Laon.

Mr. Delteil went up to his own room without saying one word; for the first time he saw clearly into the depths of his own feelings. He had never dared to own to himself that he loved the milliner; perhaps the meaning of his sensations might never have been revealed to him but for the announcement that she was going to be married. His heart felt crushed as if within a vice, and at that instant he understood that he had a heart. He burst into alternate fits of weeping and of frenzy, as if he had been a boy of eighteen, until, exhausted by the unwonted emotion, he threw himself upon his bed, writhing with jealousy and despair.

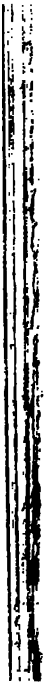
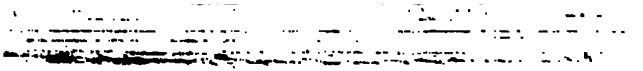
He remained shut up in his room two entire days, neither eating nor sleeping, forgetting whether it were day or night. He made a bundle of his precious notes, manuscripts, and proof-sheets, and threw it into a corner;

and he would have died thus, had not Sophy grown uneasy at missing him so long, and at last gone up to his door.

She called to him kindly and anxiously: that gentle voice he had thought never to hear again, reasserted its influence, and he rose and tottered to open the door as quickly as his weakness would allow.

Sophy entered, holding her son by the hand. "My good Mr. Delteil," she said, "I leave Laon in a week with my husband. Do you wish that I should be quite happy? Well, then, promise to grant me one favour."

Mr. Delteil hesitated; but how could he refuse anything asked by her who had recalled him to life?

"Say you will come and make our home your home, and take charge of the education of Charles Marie."

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